

# THE LONDON READER

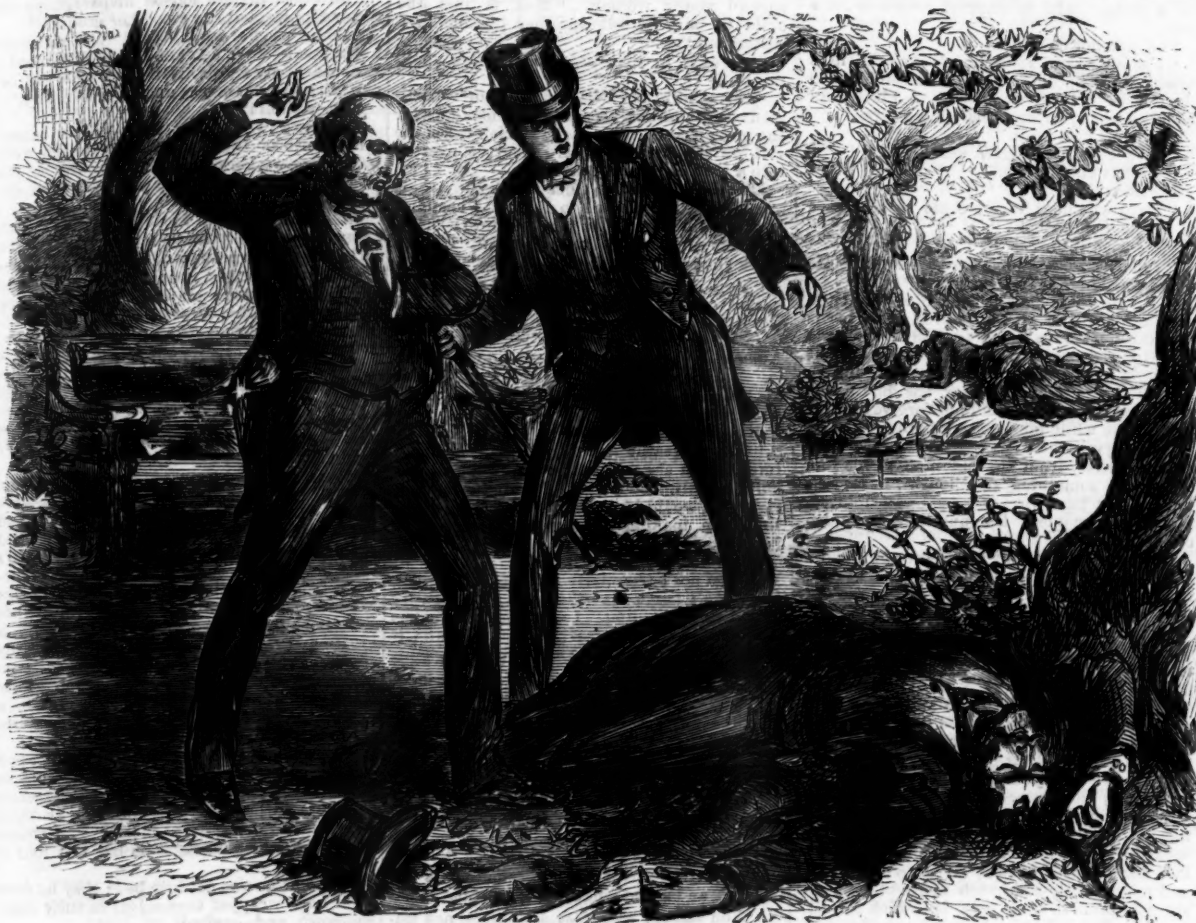
of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1372.—VOL. XLIX.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 17, 1887.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[JAMES WHARTON LAY STRETCHED BEFORE THEM IN A POOL OF BLOOD.]

## ROYAL'S PROMISE.

### CHAPTER III.

I DOUBT myself whether many girls would have enjoyed life at St. Hilda's. It was monotonous in the extreme. Her meals were of the plainest, the habits of the simplest. Everyone was expected to perform their share of work, and a tolerably large share it was too, sometimes; and of amusement, in the usual sense of the word, there was literally none.

But Nell Fortescue was happy there. She grew to love the old stone house as she had never loved her aunt's stately mansion. Hard work was far pleasanter to her than the miserable inaction, the consciousness that she was of no use to anyone, and that nobody wanted her, which, poor child, had been her daily portion for so many years.

At St. Hilda's Nell was a great favourite. Everyone of the crotheaded industrials loved her, and if ever you had been as destitute of

affection as poor little Nell, you would know that the warm attachment of five-and-twenty little children does not count for nothing. There was an air of peace over the old grey walls; a kind of subdued hush, in spite of those childish voices. It was a life apart from the world, and Nell believed it was her free choice to renounce life's pomps and vanities, forgetting, poor child, she had never yet enjoyed a taste of them, unless they were represented by her lonely existence in her aunt's schoolroom.

The Superior and the Sisters all believed that, in spite of Lord Delamere's wishes, his cousin would end by taking the black veil. True to their promise they never attempted persuasion, never tried, even indirectly, to influence her; but for all that they looked on Nell as their own, and fully hoped before many years had passed, they would welcome her among them as Sister Elinor.

It was not a rich community. The old stone house and grounds had been left by a rich merchant to his only child, and she had established a sisterhood there. It was just the spot for such a thing. The house was large

and roomy, the grounds wide and beautifully situated, sloping down to the river's bank—the river which alone divided that side of St. Hilda's lands from the broad lands of Sir Reginald Charteris.

Nell had an artistic eye, and a keen love for all that was beautiful. She was as romantic as a girl could be, and she liked in her leisure to wander down to the waterside and look across the river to the grassy sward which was the property of the Charteris's. The family was as old as their demense, dating back for centuries, and boasted many a legend, many a chronicle of romance.

There was an elderly Sister at St. Hilda's who once in her youth had known Lady Charteris intimately, and she was fond of telling long stories of her lost friend to such an eager listener as Nell. The girl almost fancied she, too, had trod the stately apartments of Marboro Hall. She, too, had known the stern old baronet in his brighter days, before the death of his favourite son had made him a recluse.

"And is it really true?" she would ask, fixing her dark eyes anxiously on Sister

Eunice's. "Has Sir Reginald never left the Hall since his loss?"

"Never once," was the firm reply. "He has never crossed the threshold, and no one has been allowed to visit him. He shuts himself up alone with his grief. He never smiles. He seems, they say, almost like one possessed with some terrible consuming dread."

"I should like to see him."

Sister Eunice started.

"To see him, child! Why, what good could it do you? Besides, Nell, it is not seemly for a young lady to express a wish to see a man."

Nell was not convinced.

"I would try to rouse him," she said, in a dreary voice, speaking more to herself than to the Sister. "It seems so awful that he should be left without anyone belonging to him."

"It is his own fault."

"How could he help his sons dying?"

"He has another son."

Nell started.

"Then why does he not come to take care of his poor old father?"

"He wished to."

"I don't understand," persisted Nell. "He ought to be here. It is his place."

"Sir Reginald never loved him," said the grey-haired Sister, sadly, "never, even in his childhood. I have heard that when the news of Ralph's death came the old man wished it had been his brother. He will not see Royal, or suffer him to come near the house. It really seems as if he could not forgive him for being alive while his brother is dead."

Nell's sympathies changed suddenly. They passed swiftly from the old man to his son. There was something, she thought, in Royal's history like her own. He, too, was unloved. From that moment the unknown exile became Nell's hero.

In all her day-dreams he was sure to figure. Sitting there by the silent river Nell weaved many a picture of Royal coming back suddenly and taking his father's heart by storm.

Meanwhile Miss Nell found herself fully occupied. At St. Hilda's everyone had plenty to do; now and then the establishment got a failure—a so-called worker, whom no amount of pressure could persuade to work; but, as a rule, the six girls who aided the Sisters in their labours were an industrious band. They received Nell as warmly as she could have wished; she was young and cheerful, and not too good, it must be confessed; the workers, as a rule, objected to people being that. There was a distinct line of division in their minds between themselves and the Sisters. Their idea was they had not yet given up the world, and might fairly take such tastes of its pleasures as came in their way, for which reason, on Saturday afternoons, their sole holiday, they loved to put on their best array and visit their friends and acquaintances in Blakesleigh.

Sunday brought another taste of the world, for they were taken to the Cathedral and planted as an advertisement to the Home (as St. Hilda's was familiarly called) in the front pew of the transept. Unluckily, they used this glance of admiring their neighbours' clothes too much; one or two spiteful folk complained that the St. Hilda's workers were always staring at them, and so the six luckless damsels were removed to the extreme back row of seats, where, bounded on one side by the Sisters, and in front and on the other by numerous industrials, their eyes, perforce, would do no harm.

Nell never resented this removal as some of the others did, for at this time Nell really was trying to be very "good;" besides, the people in the Cathedral had no attractions for her; she much preferred to shut her eyes and listen to the music.

In these days Nell never had a thought of a future spent outside the Home. She knew fresh arrangements must be made at the end of the two years, but she did not trouble herself about it. To her mind, two years seemed an endless time.

Her aunt did not take much notice of her. She spent a month in London when she had been nearly her first year at St. Hilda's, and though she was no longer treated as a little Cinderella, there was as little sympathy as ever between her and her relations.

Delamere was still in America, one of his sisters was married, the other two consoled with their mother heartily when she, in a burst of confidence, revealed to them the family compact.

"You must be careful," said Marion, a shrewd young woman. "Nell is just the child to bury herself and her fortune in a Sisterhood."

"My dear, in that case the fortune would return to us."

"Not a bit of it," declared Marion. "Religious communities keep a sharp look-out for the main chance. No doubt if Nell takes the veil we shall see Delamere Court converted into a kind of branch convent."

Mrs. Delamere wrung her hands.

"My dear, what am I to do? If I keep her here I shall be bound to take her into society, and that will be more dangerous still. I really think she is safer at the Sisterhood."

"Why can't Edwin come home and marry her at once?" demanded Marion, when she was *tête-à-tête* with her mother. "Mamma, it's all very well for you to give out he's in America on scientific business; I don't believe it. I know what his ideas were when Claude died last year, and I have a strong suspicion he is wasting his life."

Mrs. Delamere crumpled.

"Never breathe a word of this, Marion. I implore you, she said, hurriedly; "it's all that child's fault. Poor boy, if only he had his rights, he would be too happy and sought after to go on making himself wretched over a fancy."

Marion shook her head.

"I am not particularly fond of Nell myself, but I can't agree that the poor girl is guilty of Edwin's roaming. I don't believe she has the faintest idea of marrying anyone, and if Edwin is not careful she will slip through his fingers."

Mrs. Delamere wrote a distressed letter to her son, and, in return, he sent a consoling note to Nell, wherein he hoped she was happy at St. Hilda's, and that she would be ready to return to her proper home when the two years had expired. He trusted she was not imbibing Romish doctrines, and that she would remember the duties she owed to her family and relations.

Nell, who was simply bewildered by this somewhat eccentric epistle, showed it to Marion, and asked what Edwin meant.

"You know," said Miss Delamere, not unkindly, "Edwin looks on you as his ward; nothing would annoy him more than your becoming a Sister of Mercy."

"I don't want to, Marion."

"Why, you are always longing to get back to Marion; you can't deny it!"

"I am very fond of Marion; I should like to spend all my life there; but, Marion, I shouldn't like to wear a black veil, and to know I never, never would leave it off."

"Of course not," said Marion amiably. "You are much too young, and a great deal too pretty."

"You are laughing at me."

"No I am not. You used to be a plain child, but this year has done wonders for you; you have got some flesh on your bones, and your complexion has cleared wonderfully. Of course you will never be a beauty, but you are a pretty little girl, and I can quite imagine people being very fond of you."

Miss Fortescue returned to St. Hilda's, accompanied by a letter from her aunt, reminding the Superior of her promise not to influence the girl in favour of a Sister's life. There was quite a discussion in the Community Room over it.

"Nell will never marry," said Sister Joan blankly. "She is always in a dream; she is

very happy here, and here they ought to leave her."

"I wonder if they have anyone in view for her," debated the Superior, "and sent her to us till he was ready?"

Although this was the identical fact no one believed it, and the suggestion was soon forgotten; when Sister Eunice said slowly,—

"Mark my words, Nell will marry! I don't think it will be happy for her, but she is bound to have a love-story some time or other. It is written in her face."

The other Sisters looked disparagingly at Sister Eunice, but she stood her ground.

"Some people must marry," she returned unabashed. "We can't all live in Sisterhood; and, mark my words, Nell Fortescue will be one of those who marry and have a history."

"Poor child!"

Nell meanwhile went back to her accustomed duties. She laughed and talked with her fellow-workers, and joined in the simple tasks got up from time to time for their recreation.

No pleasures in the world are sweeter than those that are in a sense stolen; and the six girls got up one or two delights which, innocent in themselves, would have made the Sisters' hair stand on end. The charming novels which came into the Home promiscuously, the little snappers (consisting of apples, or bread and jam) after the eaters should have been in bed; and once—oh! worst of all—the daring schemes of Phyllis Ward, the naughtiest of the workers, who actually proposed that on St. John's Eve, when the fairies have special power, they should all try their fortunes!

Never was anything more delightful, or more terrible, for the Sisters' wrath would have been heavy had they discovered the plot, and the danger was enhanced by the daring deed requiring to be done at midnight. Nell's contribution was some pure white wax, procured from a chemist at Blakesleigh. Phyllis Ward brought a pair of candles; Gertrude Pearl, who was suspected of a love-story, a leaden spoon; a basin of cold water was easily come at, and Nell's room, as the farthest removed from the Sisters', was chosen as the scene of the magic; while Iris Leigh, a Cornish maid, well versed in fairy lore, was interpreter-in-chief.

Usually everyone went to bed at half-past eight, directly after prayers. Being June no lights were required, and the whole household should have been asleep before ten, at which hour the Superior, with ghostly step, walked through the long passages on her last tour of inspection.

To-night no one got into bed; they let down their hair, wrapped themselves in their dressing-gown, and—waited.

It seemed an endless time before the glimmer of Sister Ida's lantern was perceived. Then a great hush fell over the household, and the girls lay in breathless suspense listening to the chime of the cathedral clock, which sounded every quarter. Each of the damsels felt convinced the clock must be wrong, it seemed such a weary, weary waiting, before at last a quarter to twelve sounded on their strained ears.

Then, simultaneously, there was the noiseless opening of five doors and the gliding of five girlish figures down a long corridor, towards a door which stood ajar, revealing the palest streak of light.

Nell was sitting down before a small table, on which stood the basin of cold water. The two candles burnt close by, and she was breaking into a spoon a small portion of the white wax.

Phyllis Ward put one hand on her shoulder. She was a wonderfully pretty girl, with mischief usually dancing in her eyes. Sister Ida never hoped to enchain Phyllis. She said openly dear Miss Ward had no vocation for a secluded life; she was made for matrimony. There were some natures which required the discipline and suffering of marriage to fit them for Paradise.



This verdict, which was meant to be a terrible one, did not frighten Phyllis in the least. She laughed, as she told her five friends, and declared she was perfectly willing to embrace the lot marked out for her, provided the partner was in all things desirable.

"But," she had added, archly, "as I am here for five years, and never go out without surveillance, lest my spirits should bring discredit on the establishment, I fail to see where the partner is to be found!"

"Perhaps," suggested Gertie, "as Sister is so set upon it, she will invite someone here on purpose to introduce to you!"

"Which shows you to be a new comer, dear. In the two years I have spent here I have never exchanged a word with a gentleman, except a clergyman of eighty, and his grandson, a boy of twelve."

But the mocking light had died out of Phyllis Ward's eyes now, and she clung to Nell as though for protection.

"I do feel so frightened!"

"That's foolish!" said Hester Stanhope, a downright girl, who was rather strong-minded. "You know you need not try it even now unless you like."

"I almost forget," said Nell, dreamily. "What is it we are to find out?"

"Oh, Nell!" protested May, Hester's younger sister. "How can you? Don't you know we melt the wax and pour it into the basin? Then Iris, who is quite as good as a real witch, reads our fortune from the shape of the wax!"

Nell's whole attention seemed concentrated on the wax she was holding over the flame of one candle. At last it seemed ready.

"Who will be the first?" she asked.

But there was a general shrinking. No one volunteered. One or two cried out that they wouldn't, they were afraid, etc., etc.; and they might have gone on indefinitely with their scruples had not Hester come to the rescue by seizing the spoon herself and flinging its contents with a jerk into the water.

Mid-breathless silence, Iris, as soon as it was cold, raised it in her fingers and stood looking at it critically for half a minute.

"It is as plain as possible," she said, gravely. "There is a large square house standing in a garden. Hester, someone is going to die and leave you his property!"

"How can you tell?" demanded several voices.

"Hester's home is in London. This square house must be hers; and as it is not her present home, of course it is coming to her by gift."

Hester tried to look dubious, but May said, hopefully,—

"It must be Uncle John. He lives all alone, in a large country house. He must be going to die, and leave it to Hester!"

"Who will be the next?" said Nell Charteris; "the wax is quite ready. Look here, let us go alphabetically, then there will be no waiting to make up our minds; only Iris must be last, as she is our Sybil."

So Gertrude came forward to take her turn, and it was discovered she was going a long journey, since the wax took the form of high mountains; and there being so few in England, it naturally implied another country.

May Stanhope's fortune was so much the same shape as her sister's that everyone declared Uncle John must be going to leave his large house between them.

Then, with a little nervous shudder, Nell Charteris took up the spoon.

"It is of no use," she said to Iris. "I know I shall never have a fortune. My life will just drift on. But I may as well try."

Iris was so long looking at it this time that her audience grew impatient.

"What is it? Why don't you speak? Can't you see Nell is quite scared?"

"I don't like it!" returned Iris. "It is an open grave. I can't make it out, Nell. Either you are to save someone's life, or they are to save yours; but, whichever way it is, all the happiness of your life will come from it!"

"I don't like that!" said Phyllis, recklessly. "Don't think about it, Nell. Concentrate your energies upon my fortune. I do so want to see whether the wax agrees with Sister."

And apparently it did, for no one, however inexperienced in fortune-telling, could have taken the waxy mass which presently appeared in Iris's hand for anything but a garland of flowers—of course, of orange-blossoms.

Phyllis looked triumphant.

"I shall bear my fate with touching resignation. I see I must prepare myself for it since Sister and the wax alike predict it. Girls, since my character is to be perfected by the discipline of marriage, I invite you now to be present at the sacrifice. You might even assist at it in the character of bridesmaid."

"And bring all the industrials!" said May.

"In new frocks," suggested Hester.

"No," said Phyllis, resolutely. "I don't mind inviting the Sisters if they don't think it wicked to come; and, of course, I shall want you five as my friends, but I distinctly draw the line at the industrials; their heads look as if they had just come out of prison."

The cathedral clock chimed two, and the revellers prepared to depart; only Phyllis, pretty mirth-loving Phyllis, lingered; and, when all the rest had gone, clung just a little closer to her favourite friend.

"You mustn't think about it, Nell; promise me, dear. Iris ought never to have told you such a dreadful thing."

"I should rather like it."

"Nell!"

"There must be something noble in saving a life you know, Phyllis!"

Phyllis's teeth chattered.

"I had forgotten that part of it," she said, reluctantly. "I was thinking of the open grave; it was an awful thing to say at night. I feel quite scared myself."

"You ought not; there was no open grave in your fortune, Phyllis!"

"No!" Then, after a long pause, "Nell, are you very sleepy? I do so want to talk to you a little."

Nell put one arm round Phyllis. Utter contrasts in character these two were, yet sworn friends.

"What is it, Phyl?"

"Have you ever thought of being married?"

Nell shook her head.

"Never!"

"Oh, Nell, I wish you had."

"I never want to be married," replied Nell, quietly. "I should like to find someone very noble and brave, whom I could love and admire, and who would take care of me."

"My dear child! Then you have thought of it; that would be being married."

Nell started.

"No, I shouldn't want to be married; just to be friends, you know, that's all."

Phyllis shook her head.

"I don't believe in friendships like that. I prefer love. Nell, when I went into Blakesleigh last week, someone followed me all the way."

"How very unpleasant."

"Oh, I wasn't frightened. He never spoke, you know. I had two of the industrials to take to the dentist's, and, when I left them outside a shop for a minute, he went up and asked them who I was."

"And what did they say?"

"That I was teacher and I lived at the Home. He followed us all the way to the omnibus, and I do believe he meant to go in it, only there wasn't a seat. He had such a nice face, Nell! Do you think if he came to see the Home Sister would let me show him over it?"

"I am sure she wouldn't. She would call Hester if all the Sisters were busy. Hester disapproves of men, you know, and so it would not matter."

News came to St. Hilda's. The little com-

munity enjoyed a piece of harmless gossip as well as worldly people. On the morrow Nell felt a thrill when she heard that Sir Reginald Charteris was dead, and his son had arrived in time to close his eyes.

"They say," said Sister Annie, "Sir Royal is heartbroken. He had been travelling night and day, and he only got to the Hall half-an-hour before the end."

The tall, graceful Superior of the Sisterhood sighed almost unconsciously. She was but thirty even now, and, in days gone by, when her father lived, and St. Hilda's was still a worldly residence, she and Sir Royal Charteris had been friends and playmates. There were a few people in the neighbourhood who declared she would rather have been Mrs. Charteris than Sister Ida.

No one knew if there really had been more than simple friendship in her regard for her old playmate. Seven years ago her father died, and people predicted a marriage; but, instead, Royal went abroad, and the young heiress, after serving three years as a novice in London, came down with her staff of Sisters and workers, her flock of industrials, and made St. Hilda's into a kind of Anglican convent in all but name.

But yet she sighed as she spoke of Sir Royal's return and his accession to his honours. It was the one theme of conversation at meals, and all the Sisters at their raised table had some comment to make, while the workers, who felt quite as much interest in the subject, maintained a breathless silence.

"He is not married I think," said Sister Joan, putting the question with supreme indifference.

"Oh, no," said Sister Eunice, "but I suppose he will look for a wife now. The Hall must be terribly lonely for a single man."

"I expect he will go to London," said a third Sister, "if he does not return to his post abroad."

But Sir Royal remained at Marton. He gave up his diplomatic appointment, and expressed his intention of remaining, at any rate, some months at the Hall. He appeared at church, a tall, stately man, with a grave, earnest face and dark, clear blue eyes. People said he mourned terribly for his father; certainly he looked as though some awful blow had fallen on him. The whole neighbourhood called on him, and he returned their calls. But he gave his father's recent death as an excuse for his not entering into society much, and except for meeting him out riding occasionally, and seeing his tall head in the Hall pew, really people would not have known that he was still at Marton.

Nell Fortescue saw him among the others, and Nell decided he was just what she expected—tall, sorrowful, stately, just the man to be the hero of a history as sad as his. In her day-dreams she had always seen him coming home and winning his father's heart, and then taking his place in Highshire as the leader of the little world. Alas! the dream was dissipated; he had come home, but Nell's eyes were keen enough to see he was not happy.

He came once to St. Hilda's and sent in his card asking to see the Superior. Nell was with Sister Ada at the time, and as she passed out she and her hero met face to face. It was an awkward visit. Sir Royal said simply he could not live so near without calling on his old friend! And then he was rather at a loss what to talk about, for he could never quite forget the last time he was at St. Hilda's.

Ida's father had offered him all he possessed if he would only take with it his only child. Royal had never spoken of that interview—he never would. He hoped it was unknown to Ida, but the recollection that her father had told him only his love would keep her from a cloistered life made him constrained.

She was a beautiful woman, and he had known her all his life. The thought came to him dimly, as he sat there, that had he accepted the old man's proposal, his fate

might have been less sad. Then he recollected, with a flash, it would have been sadder, since friendship was not love, and friendship had been all he could ever have offered the stately Ida.

She showed him over the establishment. He renewed his acquaintance with Sister Eunice, and patted the heads of the younger orphans. He was not formally introduced to the workers, but he saw Hester Stanhope busy teaching sewing, and he caught a faint glimpse of Nell Fortescue standing in the July sunshine with the baby industrial in her arms. He thought her face the sweetest he had ever seen, as she stood there unconscious of his presence, the sunbeams making a halo round her golden head.

"And you are happy?" he ventured to ask the stately Superior, as he bade her adieu; "happy in the life you have chosen?"

"I am content," she said, gravely. "I doubt if anyone can truthfully say more, Sir Royal."

Sir Royal could not truthfully have said as much. He, poor fellow, was far from content. It was not a month since he had given his fatal promise, and already the burden it involved pressed heavily on him. He felt as if he had been at Marton for years. A secret trouble was ever present to him. He lived in one long terror, and alas! he might have to suffer this till death released him. If one month wearied him, how would he feel when he had borne the yoke for ten or twenty years?

"Ida's father would be thankful, I could not accept his offer," thought Sir Royal, as he walked home. "What a strange life she has chosen! I wonder if she is really happy! And those girls. Have they too, forsaken the world? Has that golden-haired child with the baby in her arms taken a vow to lead a cloistered life, with her sweet face and shy, trustful eyes?"

The butler opened the door to his master and gave him the card of a gentleman who had called in his absence—a stranger to High-shire—who desired to see the Baronet on business of importance.

Sir Royal looked annoyed. There were few things he objected to more than "business" with strangers.

Some impatient reply rose to his lips, but, suppressing it, he went upstairs to encounter the housekeeper in his own sanctum, apparently dusting the ornaments.

Sir Royal shut the door hastily.

"Anything wrong, Sarah?"

"Sir Royal, I mistrust the gentleman who was here to-day. I've seen him before. He was a visitor here, or I'm much mistaken, in poor Mr. Ralph's days."

Royal's face blanched, as it often did, at any sudden mention of his luckless brother.

"James Wharton the name is," he said, glancing at the card he still held. "James Wharton. There is no address!"

"That may be his name now," returned Mrs. Carter, "but it wasn't then. He was Mr. Dalrymple when he used to stay here. A young officer, I fancy. He had the military walk still, though he must have been going down hill very fast."

"How long was this ago?"

"Three years, Sir Royal. He was here with Mr. Ralph just before he went abroad. Sir Reginald, he wanted your brother to go to you, but he wouldn't hear of it. He said a regular tour on the continent was what he wanted, and he and Mr. Dalrymple would go together."

Royal listened attentively.

"And afterwards?"

"I never heard a word of Mr. Dalrymple, sir, from that time to this. He went dead against Mr. Ralph, I know. They had a fearful quarrel before the end."

"What can he want?"

Mrs. Carter shook her head.

"Maybe he's down in his luck, poor fellow, and thought you'd give him a bank-note for your brother's sake, sir."

"Then he would not have given a false name, Sarah!"

All further discussion was interrupted by the butler coming with the news that Mr. Wharton had returned, and was desiring to see Sir Royal.

Royal Charteris was no coward, but he shrank from the thought of the interview before him.

"Show him into the library, Giles, and say I am coming." Then, as the man vanished, he said to Sarah, "Are you sure this is Dalrymple?"

"Certain, Sir Royal; but you can easily prove it unless he keeps his gloves on. Mr. Dalrymple cut his hand badly while he was here, just across the back, and the doctor said he would carry the scar to his grave. It's the left hand, Sir Royal—a jagged, crooked one."

"I will be careful."

As a boy Royal Charteris had been remarkable for a calm, even temper. In the months he had resided at Marton Hall not one of his servants had seen him angry. Judge, then, of the amazement of the butler and head footman, who stood close to the front door ready to let out Mr. Wharton, when, half-an-hour later, their master appeared in company with the stranger, his face white with rage, his hand raised threateningly, and his voice almost unrecognizable from passion.

"You are quite sure?" asked the visitor, in an insolent, mocking tone. "Haden't you better change your mind while there is time? I warn you the consequences will not be particularly pleasant!"

"You have had my answer!" cried Royal, passionately. "And since you talk of warnings, let me give you one not to trespass on my property again. I warn you, if you are found within my grounds, I will have you hunted off with little ceremony!"

"War to the knife, eh! You are rather rash, all things considered, I must say, Sir Royal Charteris!"

Sir Royal seized a horsewhip, and in another moment would have laid it about the intruder's shoulders had not old Ward, with an imploring glance, stepped between them.

"For Heaven's sake forbear, sir," he whispered to his master. "Don't soil your fingers by touching him, Sir Royal."

"Then let him go," cried Sir Royal, bitterly, "and beware how he returns. I warn him he won't meet with pleasant treatment next time."

"You hear," said Mr. Wharton to the servants. "Really, I've a great mind to have him bound over to keep the peace."

But Ward and the tall footman both took hold of Mr. Wharton, and between them they deposited him on the steps, slipping the bolt of the door to prevent his return.

"That was the nastiest job I've had for years," said the butler later on. "What could the fellow have said to put the master out so?"

"He wasn't much account," said Giles scornfully. "He smelt of gin and stale smoke."

"I wish I'd seen him safely off the premises," reflected Ward, "but I was so scared, and only thought of getting him out of the house. I hope he isn't lurking in the grounds anywhere. I wouldn't have the master and him meet for worlds."

"I could go and ask Mary at the lodge," suggested Giles, "whether she opened the gates for him!"

"I wish you would."

But the answer was not reassuring.

Mary Ward, who was Giles's wife and the butler's daughter-in-law, had declared positively the stranger had not passed out of the lodge gates. She let him in early in the afternoon, and one of the children had told her they saw him later wandering by the banks of the river, so she imagined he had been to see Royal for permission to fish.

"Which he wouldn't have got," said Giles.

"The master won't have any one fish down

there on account of the nuns on the other side of the bank. He said only to-day he wouldn't have their privacy disturbed. I remember, because it puzzled me, as he is always going backwards and forwards to that pavilion place Sir Ralph built, which is close to the river."

"Ah, but the tall trees hide it," said his wife. "The master goes there most nights. I think he reads and smokes there."

Giles said nothing to alarm his wife, but carried the story home to his father. Mr. Wharton had made straight for the river banks, which, as both knew, was Sir Royal's favourite haunt.

It was eight o'clock by this time, but there was only one thought in the butler's mind; he must find the man who had so irritated Sir Royal, and hunt him off the Charteris grounds. Sir Royal had dined at seven, and gone out. Of course he might have turned straight to the river and the dreaded meeting have taken place, but still there was just a chance of avoiding it.

At his utmost speed, accompanied by Giles brandishing a heavy stick in case Mr. Wharton proved refractory, the butler hurried on. They had almost reached the spot when the report of a pistol seized them with a terrible dread. Involuntarily they increased their speed. They reached the spot where the river was at its narrowest, and it almost seemed possible to jump from the Charteris side into the St. Hilda gardens. The men's hearts almost stood still.

James Wharton lay stretched before them in a pool of blood, and in the distance they could see a tall, masculine form, hurriedly retreating.

"Great Heaven!"

"Giles," and the poor old man's voice shook, "it can't be true. He couldn't go for to do such a thing."

"I'm afraid he did, but he was driven to it. He never meant to do it, and we must try and screen him."

Ward only groaned heavily, "Look there!"

There on the other side of the river, in the quiet deserted garden, was a still, motionless form. A slight black-robed girl lay insensible on the soft green turf. Some terrible fright had undoubtedly robbed her of consciousness, and she had fainted.

"Look!" said Ward, sadly. "How can we screen him? She has seen it!"

(To be continued.)

## TRUE AS THE STARS.

—O—

### CHAPTER X.—(continued.)

"Now, Rhoda, be as quiet as a mouse," said Amy, as she opened her cousin's door softly in the early hours of the morning, and beckoned her to come out.

Rhoda had been up and dressed for some time, and she needed no second bidding. She had scarcely slept all night for thinking of that last good-bye to be said on the shore with the waves between them; and, after creeping down the stairs and through the silent hall, she went through the garden with such fleet steps that Amy could scarcely keep up with her.

The two girls, panting and breathless, gained the furthest extremity of "Old Man's Point," and sat down on some rocks to wait and watch—the one for her unacknowledged lover, the other for the husband, whom she scarcely dared to claim for a friend.

"There they are!" cried Amy, excitedly, as the large white troopship came in sight, proudly plunging its way with its powerful engines over the silvery water.

The decks were crowded, but two figures stood out more prominently than the rest. One was waving a large red handkerchief, according to agreement, to which Miss Amy Sumner was responding vigorously, whilst the



other, after a long look through a field-glass, took off his forage-cap and raised it high above his head.

He recognized at a glance that slim figure, with the white skirts fluttering in the wind; and a great lump rose in his throat, and the tears started to his eyes. Whilst she, poor child, stretched out her arms with a voiceless cry, then sank in a heap on the rocks.

An indescribable feeling of desolation crept over her as the ship was hidden from sight. He was gone, and she was left alone to fight her battle with the world—a child, with all a woman's rights—a wife, with no sign of the wifehood but a wedding-ring hidden away in cotton wool!

"Oh, isn't it sad?" sobbed Amy, as the tears ran down her plump cheeks and spoiled the freshness of her pink cambric. "I shall never care for anything now. I won't go to another dance or garden-party till Felix comes back from Egypt; I declare I won't! Why don't you speak?" turning round impatiently. "Why, what's the matter? You look like a ghost!"

Rhoda raised her head, and looked up with startled eyes.

"I—I'm so sorry for them," she said, falteringly. "War is so terrible!"

"Oh, stuff and nonsense! I wouldn't bother my head about that, for the war may be over before they get there. But if you have any one to care about in particular, it's disgusting and heart-breaking, and all that," blowing her nose and sobbing alternately.

Any one to care about! Rhoda clasped her hands tight in the bitterness of her soul, and bent her head, and then the pent-up passion broke forth in a perfect tempest of sobs, and her face sank down on the cold, rough rock, and she forgot everything in earth and Heaven except the one bare fact that Douglas Yelverton was gone—whilst Amy stood by and stared!

## CHAPTER XI.

### A NEW FRIEND.

A few weeks later there were great preparations going on at Sumner Lodge—for it was Virginia's birthday, and Mrs. Sumner had been persuaded into giving a ball.

The mistress of the house enjoyed every kind of festivity, although she thought it right to yield her consent with the air of a martyr; but the master—a good-hearted, retiring, quiet sort of man, with a wise head for business, and a foolish head with regard to his family—hated society, and grew rabid when there was a prospect of his home being invaded by a crowd. His temper on such occasions became outrageous; and his family, with one consent, left him as much as possible to himself.

Only Rhoda dared to face him—for she could not be considered responsible for the vagaries of the household, and he was always gentle with her—perhaps because of her beauty—possibly because she never crossed his will.

"Now Rhoda, look here. I've got all the materials together, and you must make that fireplace look lovely. I'm sure you can do it if you try," said Virginia, letting a whole lapful of moss fall on the parqueted floor of the drawing-room, whilst she deposited a basket of roses and ferns close by. "And, mind, if Edward comes, tell him that I am in the boudoir arranging flowers."

"I'll tell him," said Rhoda readily, as she immediately began to set to work, touching the roses with loving fingers, that did no damage to their delicate petals.

She was very busy hammering away with all her might at a refractory nail, which refused to be anchored in a crevice, when the hammer was suddenly caught out of her grasp, and another hand laid on the fingers which were trying to steady the nail. She looked up in angry astonishment to find Edward Staveley's face within a few inches of her own.

"So delighted that I've come just at the right moment!" he said, his light lashes not thick enough to hide the delight sparkling in his eyes. "This is my work, not yours."

"You are mistaken," very gravely. "Your work is waiting for you in the boudoir."

"Then my 'play' is here; and I always hated work," brandishing the hammer.

"Virginia told me to tell you that she is arranging flowers in the boudoir."

"Let her—dear thing! How much better she will do them if I don't interrupt. Now I'm such a modest fellow. I never go where I am not wanted."

"Then how did you come here?" looking up at him, with grave inquiry in her eyes.

A pale pink stole into his cheeks. "I came to ask a question," he said doggedly; "and, mind, you've got to give me a civil answer."

"Civility is very cheap. I hope I can afford it," with a contemptuous smile; but her fingers began to shake as she arranged the pieces of moss, for as a lightning flash the little wood at Sea View came before her eyes; and she knew that she was to a certain extent in his power. He did not know—thank Heaven!—half as much as Captain Dormer; but she could not tell how much he might guess. Therefore the combat always going on between the two could not be fought fairly, and the advantage was too often on his side.

"Glad to hear it, for you are always too economical in that respect—and I was afraid your finances would not stand it much longer."

"Economy was never in my line. Doesn't it look nice!" she exclaimed with enthusiasm, as she made a white Niphetos rose nestle in the soft green moss beside a spray of red ivy.

"Awfully!" looking down straight into the pretty flushed face. "I tell you what," with sudden earnestness, "if you had on nothing better than a blanket, and they were dressed up to the nines, I give you my word you would beat them all into fits."

"Thank you, Mr. Staveley," with flashing eyes, "I never shall go about in a blanket, and if I did, I should be sorry to out out my cousins."

"You can't help it," rubbing his hands. "I said so from the first."

"Did you say so to Virginia?" icily.

"No. I flatter her up to the skies, in order to put her into a good temper!"

"Then go and do it now!"

"Not till you've promised to give me four round dances," bending over her eagerly.

"Are you mad?"

"Not that I know of—but you always turn my head!"

"No. If I had any power over it I would always turn it another way!"

"Now, joking apart, promise me those dances!"

"Not one!" pale, but defiant.

"By Jove, you shall," almost fiercely. "Do you want me to tell everyone I come across that you were loafing about Sea View with Yelverton?"

Like a crimson flood the blood rushed over cheek and forehead to the soft brown curls above, but she would not flinch.

"I want you to behave like a gentleman, but I don't suppose you can!"

"Rhoda, you little vixen!" he began, but changed his tone as well as his position as a step he knew very well came quickly along the hall. "As I can't help you any longer I will go after Virginia," making his way to the door. "Oh, here you are. I was just coming to you!"

"What are you doing here?" said Virginia, looking over his shoulder suspiciously at Rhoda in the distance.

"Only knocking in a few nails, which seemed to be too hard work for Miss Macdonald's absurd little fingers. I am thankful, Virginia, that you are made in a different mould, or I should be afraid of coming near you lest you should break in pieces. Come into the garden for a stroll."

"I really ought to be hard at work, but I will for five minutes," relenting with a smile.

Rhoda looked after them as they went out of the room, their two heads close together, and whispering soft inanities like a pair of model lovers.

She clenched her hands and set her teeth, her chest heaving with suppressed rage.

"Oh, for one hour of a man's strength, that I might thrash him within an inch of his life!" she exclaimed, in the first fire of her wrath.

"I have an average amount of strength," Miss Macdonald, said a voice behind her, "and I assure you it is entirely at your service," and looking round with horrified eyes she saw a stranger just inside the open window, regarding her with too evident amusement.

He was a man of unusual height, with broad shoulders and well-knit muscular limbs. His face had a sort of insolent beauty about it which might attract the few, and would certainly repel the many, and his manner had an audacity which was only half-toned down into courtesy when he had to deal with a girl who would not stand impertinence. Certain that she had never seen him before, Rhoda drew herself up with quiet dignity.

"How long have you been listening?" she asked, severely, though she felt inclined to sink into the ground.

"On my honour not more than a minute and a half," laughing. "Are you in the habit of talking to yourself?"

"Never! I will go and tell Mrs. Sumner that you are here."

"Pray don't disturb her. I am not dying for the honour. I want you to tell me who the man is whom you hate so ferociously?" coming forward, and contemplating the effect of her labours at the fireplace with a critical eye.

"That does not concern you!"

"If you won't tell me I shall have to find out for myself!"

"It does not matter to you or to anyone else," arranging the roses, hurriedly.

"You are not thinking of what you are doing. Just see how you are crowding those roses!" coolly undoing part of her handiwork. "If I were a vain man I should imagine you were thinking of me instead of the flowers," a quiet smile curling the tips of his moustaches.

"It requires no vanity to see that you are disturbing me!"

"Excuse me, that depends on the point of view. It isn't only a bore that disturbs—other people do it just as well. But don't let us fight. I've made up my mind that you and I are to be great friends. You can't have any objection," his dark eyes twinkling.

"I don't know that I can't," an involuntary smile hovering about her pretty lips as she bent her head, and went on with her work with an air of prosaic business.

"I know all about Virginia and her tame cat. I've also heard that the *Orontes* sailed a month ago with a certain lanky Major on board, leaving Amy disconsolate, and I said to myself, Miss Macdonald is my only choice. After being badgered by all the impetuous swaggering soldiers in the place, a plain, down-right civilian, like myself, will be a welcome change."

"You are Lord Faulkner," she exclaimed, as it suddenly flashed across her that this man, who had called the Sumners familiarly by their Christian names, and was acquainted with the family history, must be Mrs. Sumner's nephew, and her own cousin.

"Why didn't you say so before?"

"Because you looked at me so huffily. I never was so snubbed in my life."

And he laughed as he held out his hand. She put hers into it, and the flush on her cheeks deepened as he held it tight, instead of simply shaking it.

"Let me see," he said, slowly, his bold eyes fixed on her blushes in evident enjoyment, "your name is Rhoda, and you are free, with no tame cat—no long-legged Major attached to your heels. Jove, it's a lucky chance. I

came in time! Don't be in a hurry"—as she tried to draw away her hand. "Before we go a step farther I want to find out all about you. In my country, which, by-the-by, is just the same as yours, long-lost cousins when they manage to meet at last, throw themselves dramatically into each other's arms. Shall we do it now?"

"Not for the world!" snatching her hand away with crimson cheeks.

He laughed again—the easy laugh of conscious power; and then, picking up some of the moss, began silently to help her. They were working together busily, as if they had been old friends, when Mrs. Sumner came bustling into the room on some important errand, and stood still, transfixed by astonishment.

"Faulkner! Is it possible?"

"How do, aunt!" walking slowly towards her.

"Why did no one tell me that you were here?"

"Because I came in at the window," stooping his dark head, and kissing her plump good-looking face on both cheeks.

"But why didn't Rhoda?"

"Because I wouldn't let her. What do you think of our fireplace—isn't it lovely?"

"Quite perfect," said Mrs. Sumner, politely, but there was no enthusiasm in her tone.

The words "our fireplace" grated on her ears, and she was shocked to see that Rhoda had been making hay in a field that she had no right to enter. To her injured aunt it seemed as clear a case of trespassing as a magistrate ever punished, and she said severely,—

"The fireplace has taken an extraordinary time, and Amy is wanting your help."

Rhoda quietly gathered up the scraps, and left the room, whilst Lord Faulkner looked after her regretfully.

## CHAPTER XII.

### AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.

"HAVE you seen him; isn't he splendid?" asked Amy, with sparkling eyes, as she ran into Rhoda's room, when she was dressing for the ball.

"He's splendidly big, if you mean that," as she twisted up a long coil of sunny-brown hair, with one twist of her delicately-rounded arm.

"I don't know if size is as great a recommendation in a man as in a prize pig!"

"Oh, but he's very handsome, and quite a hero. He has beard the Russians in the depths of Siberia; he has shot grizzlies on the Rockies, and gone round the world in a yacht. He has fought duels with German princes, flirted with princesses, broken the bank at Monte Carlo, and beaten the gun-club at Hurlingham. Isn't that enough for you?"

"Quite," with a smile. "Rather too much, I think. What brings him here?"

"Not Virginia's birthday. You may be quite sure of that. Some people say it's Lady Diana Stuart, who is expected to-morrow, but I suspect there's something else in the background. Mamma is mad to think that Virginia is engaged, and knowing nothing about Felix," with a blush, "looks upon me as her only hope. So look out, Rhoda. There's a chance for you!"

And then she ran out, exclaiming that she would be too late, and shut the door behind her.

A chance for you! Now that Rhoda had started on the road of deception, every sentence, however carelessly spoken, seemed to contain an arrow that went home, and it was no use to shrink and hold back. She must go down in a perfect armour of indifference and face Captain Dormer, who made her one big blush from head to foot, and Edward Staveley, who was sure to set her young heart throbbing with indignation. And then she was

expected to enjoy herself! Oh! the mockery of it all. Would life be always a martyrdom till the Egyptian war was over, and the Royal Blue Lancers came steaming back to England?

"It's a right-down shame that you haven't a new dress," said Mason, as she faced the simple white muslin frock, which was considered quite good enough for Miss Macdonald.

"You may call this evening your coming out, for you've never been to a regular ball; before, and wouldn't your Pa, that's out in India, be a proud parent if he could see you to-night?"

"No, Mason," raising a pair of sorrowful eyes to gaze at their own sweet reflection, "he wouldn't be proud at all, and I—I don't know even if I should be glad."

"Why, miss! Lawk-a-daisy, you must be dreaming! You always said it would send you wild with happiness if the General came home!"

"I used to think so," with a sigh. "But, perhaps, he wouldn't approve of me!"

Before Mason could say anything there was a tap at the door, and she went to answer it, only opening a small chink.

"Just let me see her," said an eager voice, and the door was pushed wide open.

"You look divine, entrancing!" cried Edward Staveley, as he stood on the threshold, and kissed the tips of his fingers. "Just pin in my flowers, and come down like a shot."

He vanished, and Mason came towards her with a bunch of exquisite roses. There was a scrap of paper pinned to the stalks on which was written legibly so that anyone could see it, "For my darling little vixen," and there was a smile on the housemaid's lips, a knowing look in her eyes, which made Rhoda's indignation rise with a bound to fever-heat. She caught the paper and tore it in twenty pieces, then pushed the flowers back into Mason's hands.

"There's some mistake," she said, coldly. "They must be meant for Miss Summer. Take them to her from Mr. Staveley."

Then she gathered up her fan and various etoieras, and sailed out of the room with the air of a queen.

"Won't there be a storm and a half some day—I'd bet sixpence!" said the housemaid to herself, as she made her way to Virginia's room and presented the roses, with Mr. Staveley's compliments.

"Dear fellow. How good of him," exclaimed his fiancée, "when he has already spent a fortune on lilies-of-the-valley. What can I do, Amy? They won't look at all nice mixed."

"But you must mix them, or carry them in your hand or something. He'll be so hurt if you don't use them," said Amy, thinking of her own gallant Major, who had managed to scrape together two or three monthly roses on the day of the dance at Blank Fort, of which now a few withered leaves were left, kept with all her most treasured trinkets in her dressing-case.

Rhoda went slowly down stairs, buttoning her long gloves on her softly-rounded arms. She looked a perfect picture of youth and beauty, her gold-brown hair shining like a coronal in the light of many lamps, her simple white dress fitting her slight figure as the Americans would say "like a wall-paper," an expression of sweet gravity on the childlike face.

Edward Staveley was waiting for her at the bottom of the stairs, and his weak, impulsive heart seemed to go out to her in an almost irresistible wave of longing.

"Why was it?" he asked himself in vain regret. "Why had he been such a double-dyed fool as to choose Virginia for his wife, and tie himself hand and foot, before he had seen this other girl, who charmed him at once with a simple glance of her tawny eyes?"

"You've cheated me," he said, fiercely. "Where are my flowers? You've no right to despise them, but I'll pay you out."

"Excuse me," said Lord Faulkner's voice

close behind him; "If I understand the position, you've no right to offer flowers to anyone but my cousin Virginia. Come with me, Miss Macdonald; I'm a free man, and you and I can do what we like, go where we like, and have any amount of fun together without a soul having the right to make an outcry."

So saying, he quietly walked away with Rhoda, leaving Staveley almost beside himself with rage. Yet he was obliged to command himself, for the next moment his own Virginia came tripping down the stairs with the roses in her hand.

"So kind of you, dear Ned!" she said affectionately, as she put her ungloved hand within his arm. "You have perfectly smothered me with flowers to-day, and these last are deliciously lovely!"

"So glad you like them," he said, curtsy; "but," taking a long look at her much-be-frizzled pate, "why, in the name of goodness, have you curled up your hair in that outrageous manner?"

"Outrageous, Edward! What do you mean?" flushing crimson with mortified vanity, for he had never dared to disapprove of anything she did before. "You said you liked the way Rhoda did her hair, so I copied it on purpose to please you."

"Good heavens! how absurd," he said, still too much excited to remember his usual prudence. "Do you think your head, your style, or anything about you is in the least like Rhoda Macdonald? Can't you see that she's as far above—?"

He stopped abruptly, electrified by the expression on his fiancée's face.

"Above me? Say it out. Pray, don't stop!" her voice literally hoarse with suppressed rage as she tried to draw her hand from his arm. But he only held it tighter, for his small amount of courage had evaporated as quickly as it came.

"Above the ordinary run of girls in Portsmouth; that was all, Virginia," speaking soothingly like the purring of a cat. "You are so grand, so statuesque, that an opera bouffe sort of headdress looks not quite the thing," he ended, apologetically.

"Opera-bouffe! I never heard of such a thing. My maid said it was very becoming, and she ought to know," doubtfully.

"Of course she ought to know; and I'm an ignorant duffer. I'm to have the first dance, darling?"

"Oh, certainly. But about my hair?"

"Never mind your hair. You look too gorgeously delightful!"

There was something in Lord Faulkner's free-and-easy way that made Rhoda exceedingly uncomfortable, and she did not enjoy the turn which he insisted on her taking in the empty but brilliantly-lighted drawing-room.

"Now, look here," he said, stopping by the open window; "I've taken a fancy to you, but I want to explain at once that I'm not a marrying man."

"Lord Faulkner!" drawing up her neck in insulted dignity.

"Don't fly into a rage. I thought you were sensible, and would know how to take me. As long as I'm here, I want you to regard me as your property. Make any use you like of me. When you want to get rid of a partner swear you are engaged to me. Let me be your friend and ally; and I'll promise to stick to you through thick and thin. Now is that a compact?" looking down into her eyes, as he laid his large well-shaped hand upon the tiny little one which rested on his arm.

"Rhoda, where are you?" The question came from Virginia, who was standing in the doorway with Staveley by her side; and the manner in which she asked showed that she knew where her cousin was, and thought her conduct very reprehensible. "Don't you know that mamma said we were all to assemble in the library, and that numbers of people have come already?"

"I did not know. I am quite ready," said Rhoda, biting her lip.



She drew her hand determinedly from Lord Faulkner's arm, and, slipping through a door to the left, made her way through the hall to the library. In the doorway Captain Dormer was standing, talking to a friend. As he made room for her she passed by him with a cold bow and a heightened colour.

The guests came pouring in, the music struck up, and dancing began; and Rhoda's young heart ought to have been beating with joy and excitement. But the absent husband was a weight on her spirits, and the "present enemies," as she called Mr. Staveley and Captain Dormer, were almost worse.

How could she laugh and be at her ease with Frank's reproachful gaze following her wherever she went; with Virginia's lover pursuing her with his distasteful attentions? Frank watched her closely, and fidgeted her intensely, in his efforts to keep his promise to his chum; but he never asked her to dance. His heart was drawn to her against his will; but he told himself that she was a bold, horrid sort of girl, and the less he had to do with her the better.

"You shall dance this with me," said Staveley, when the evening was already far advanced; and Rhoda was afraid to refuse him any longer.

He put his arm round her waist, and started off like a child's top, coming into collision with everyone who came near him. Rhoda, tired and breathless, came to a standstill close to one of the French windows.

"What, tired already!" said Staveley, taking it as a personal affront. "You went on for ever with Faulkner!"

"You must remember I've been ill, and I'm not as strong as a horse," she said, gently, not anxious to offend him.

"Well, come into the garden for a breath of air; but stop a bit," looking towards the door; "there's somebody arriving. I wonder who she can be? Rather late, isn't it? Jove, she looks no end of a swell!"

"Don't you know her?" said Lord Faulkner's voice behind them. "It's Lady Diana Stuart! Just like her, to drop in when she is least expected; but I knew she was coming."

"But is she staying at Porthampton?"

"No, she came round in the *Flycatcher*. A report reached her that the Blue Lancers were off, but she's just too late."

"Personally interested in any of the lot?" asked Staveley, always eager for a bit of gossip.

"Lady Di is engaged to a fellow called Yelverton, so she has to keep up a show of it."

"Excuse me," said Staveley, hurriedly, "Mrs. Sumner is beckoning to me."

"Rhoda!" said Lord Faulkner, in an alarmed whisper, as he caught sight of her ashen face. Little did he know how fiercely she was battling with her weakness as the room whirled round and the lights seemed to come down into her eyes. But, as she tottered, he caught her in his arms, and half-carried, half-led her into the dusky-scented twilight of the garden. He did not place her on the first seat he came to, but waited till he found one in a shady nook, where she would be hidden from all eyes except his own. Then he knelt down by her, so as to bring his tall figure more on a level with hers, and made his shoulder do duty for a cushion to her drooping head.

"Is it true?" she said, with a sigh and a shiver, just as he was admiring the length of her eyelashes.

"This is true," he said, savagely. "If Yelverton has been playing a double game with you and Diana, as soon as he sets foot in England I'll break every bone in his body."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### "LADY DI'S REVENGE."

LADY DIANA STUART sat alone in her boudoir in Castle Stuart, meditating. To judge from

the expression on her handsome face, her meditations were not altogether pleasant. For year after year she had gone on her way triumphant.

Men fell in love with her as naturally as sun-flowers turn to the sun, and she accepted their devotion as if it were a right, laughing musically when they floundered into sentimentalities, and dismissing them playfully if they attempted to be tragic.

In spite of her passionate eyes, and soft alluring ways, men told each other bitterly that her heart was cold as ice, and what was death to them was empty play to her. And one, in the bitterness of his wrath at a cool dismissal after months of drawing on, when every art of captivation had been used on him to bind him faster in his chains, cursed her as he stood outside in the cold moonlight, which was not colder than the woman whom he had loved with all the force and fire of his nature, and cried aloud that he hoped from the bottom of his heart that her pride and her haughtiness might be laid low in the dust, and all her love wasted on a man who did not care for her. And now had the prayer come true?

There was something in Douglas Yelverton which drew her to him as if by a charm, when they first met in Dublin. It was not that he was handsomer than anybody else, or even that he was more amusing or agreeable; but he seemed always to know what she wanted or what she meant, guessing her wishes or her meaning as if by intuition before a word was spoken.

Her father, the Earl of Lochleven, took a fancy to the young lancer, and asked him to come to dinner whenever he liked, and as it was considered rather a "swagger" thing to be intimate with the members of the Stuart family, Captain Yelverton came very often, and stayed very late, even when he did not put up under their hospitable roof.

There were men of higher birth, and better prospects than the cavalry officer, but they all had to stand aside for Douglas Yelverton. It was he who chose her horses, who arranged her betting-book, and brought her the last tip from the racing stables.

When the Persian mats were cleared from the polished floor, and the arm-chairs and sofas wheeled out of the long saloon, and some one sat down to the piano, and the first bars of some favourite waltz came floating through the room, it was Douglas Yelverton who had always the first dance and the last with Lady Di, and the longest talk under the palms in the conservatory.

Was it a wonder that when she stooped to draw him on, he let her lead him where she would? Was it surprising that when she tempted him with all the power of her beauty and her charm—with half-finished sentences and glances, which spoke too eloquently what the full red lips hesitated to say—with tenderest smiles such as she never wasted on any other human-being? Was it strange that, half-bewildered and intoxicated, he yielded to the sweet infatuation, and asked her to be his for ever?

As he pressed his lips to her, and her soft white arms passed shyly round his neck, he told himself that he was the happiest man on earth; and he went about Dublin with the air of a conqueror. But after a time the reaction came.

The Earl at first did not seem charmed to have him for a son-in-law, and the Yelverton pride was up in arms at once. There was a good old family, reaching back to the battle of Hastings and the days of the Conqueror; and its members were apt to think their name as good as any peerage. In his indignation, Douglas Yelverton very nearly broke off the engagement. He went off in a huff; and during his absence was told many stories about his betrothed, which annoyed him exceedingly. He could not bear anything in the shape of fastness in a woman; and when he was told how sometimes Lady Diana descended to the smoking-room in an elaborate tea-gown

—or dressing-gown as some men called it—and sat surrounded by clouds of smoke, a cigarette between her lips—her ears wide open to stories which were considered too strong for the drawing-room—how she condescended to play hide-and-seek in the dark—not with children, but with grown-up men and women—and was not too utterly shocked when she paid the penalty of her rashness by a stolen kiss or squeeze of the hand when opportunity favoured the daring—how she wore the colours of a noted *roué* at a race-course, drove him home in her own mail-coach, and let him stay to dinner, with a few other choice spirits, during her father's and mother's absence—then his love grew cold within him, and his heart sank down into his boots. It never occurred to him to object to her betting-book and other sporting ways so long as he only thought of her as a friend or acquaintance; but he disapproved of them strongly when she was to bear his name, and be the head of his future household.

They had a stormy interview, and hot words passed from one to another, and for an instant her long, slender fingers fastened on her engagement-ring, and she was on the point of flinging it at his feet. His fate hung in the balance, and he knew it; and watched her with feverish anxiety. Though his love for her compared with hers for him was as a puny trickling stream to the maddening force of Niagara, he could not wish her to throw him over.

Sometimes when away from her he had almost wished to be free, but not now when she was looking so magnificent in her anger, and her splendid figure was drawn up to her full height, and her eyes were flashing like those of a Cleopatra roused to wrath by an insolent Cæsar.

He had seen nothing of Rhoda Macdonald, and he had no special longing to be free, so that when Lady Diana softened, and sobbed like a child, he was quite glad to assure her that he had been a brute, and to give her the kiss of forgiveness.

He was to have spent Christmas at Castle Stuart, but he heard that his great friend Frank Dormer was lying dangerously ill and all alone in a hotel in York, and he hurried northward to nurse him. The doctors said that Dormer must have died without Yelverton's devoted attendance.

Night and day he sat by his bedside, and thought nothing too much trouble so long as he could pull him through. There was great satisfaction in his mind when Frank was able at last to sit up in bed, looking white and haggard, and grip his hand, and tell him, hoarsely, "that there never was such a brick as dear old Yel."

He would not leave him alone in his weakness, but sent for his horses, and did a little hunting over the Yorkshire wolds. He used to come back full of some ridiculous adventures with which to cheer his friend, and drew graphic pictures of the northern farmers on their sturdy hunters keeping up well with the hounds, and "taking" everything that came in their way, with a determination that nothing could balk.

When Frank was well enough to move Yelverton's leave was up, and he returned to Porthampton to find Castle Stuart, which was not far off, shut up for six months. Lady Lochleven had gone to the south of France and taken her daughter with her, and the Earl was amusing himself in Paris.

It was then that having nothing particular to interest him, and plenty of leisure on his hands—for his regimental duties were not severe—that he came across Rhoda Macdonald.

She charmed him at once by her simplicity and innocence, and more especially by her shyness, which in his set was an almost forgotten attribute; and being a man of little self-restraint, he gave way to the charm, and let himself drift down the stream of desire.

When he roused himself to a sense of his position—when Frank Dormer gently reminded

him that there was such a person as Lady Diana—it was too late. He had given the first strong love of his life to a little girl, and he could not live without her.

When, perhaps, he might have drawn back, when his conscience began to sting him, and scruples grew in wakeful nights, then he found that she was unhappy, that even the home in which she found herself did not protect her from another man's insulting attentions, all the chivalry of his nature was roused in her defence.

Only as his wife could he shield her from anything and everything, and out of her great necessity grew that romantic marriage in the Isle of Wight. True that he had to abandon her as soon as it was consummated, but how could he tell that his regiment would get the route for Egypt when everyone thought that the Royal Blue Lancers had been passed over?

And so it came to pass that Douglas Yelverton was out in Egypt, bound indissolubly to Rhoda Macdonald, whilst Lady Diana was sitting with knitted brows alone in her boudoir at Castle Stuart. From one or two hints that she had gathered from some of her partners she felt certain that Douglas had been forcibly attracted by Mrs. Sumner's niece. What was her charm? She had a pretty face certainly, but there were others who were absolutely beautiful; and as she thought it Lady Diana cast a careless glance towards a mirror in which her own beauty was exactly reflected. It must be her shyness—her evident innocence—which were so refreshing to a man who had moved in a set that might be called fast by an indiscriminating public. If these were modified or destroyed the charm would be gone, and Douglas would be disgusted to think he had given two thoughts to a girl who was no better than the rest.

The angry look deepened on Lady Diana's face, till in her proud, haughty beauty she looked like a goddess of evil. Rhoda had blushed when she—a woman—spoke to her. She had looked shy and almost frightened at the insolent admiration in Lord Faulkner's eyes. And, of course, this flattered the Viscount, and gave him a peculiar sensation which had a certain charm.

It must be remedied—yes—she knew how. She would not hide her from Douglas on his return. No, he should see her, but so changed—so utterly different from the simple little girl he had left behind him that he would turn from her in disgust. This should be her work; and knowing human nature as she did in its lowest depths, as also sometimes in its heights, she felt confident of success, and set her teeth as if for a fight.

(To be continued.)

## THE SEXTON'S STORY.

—101—

It was in a pretty, old-fashioned, country churchyard that I heard the following story. The sexton had been at work at a little distance, but he observed the interest with which I had stopped to gaze upon a straight shaft of white marble, on which was cut the simple inscription—

BIANCA MORELLI.

Aged 17.

They are shrewd readers of the human countenance, these old sextons, and mine must have told him that I longed to know the story attached to that brief obituary.

"She was an Italian," he began; but for the reader's benefit I will translate his queer phraseology into ordinary English, since I cannot reproduce the queer and quavering voice of the speaker.

"I never beheld a prettier girl; eyes so big and dark and shiny; a complexion like ivory, and the reddest lips. She was a fine figure of a girl, too; tall and elegant, though slight;

and the regular blue-black hair that I've heard belongs to that kind of beauty. Her family consisted of an uncle and aunt, and their son, to whom she was engaged to be married, and whom she seemed to hate worse than poison.

"It isn't likely that I would ever have known the family affairs of folks so far above me, even in a country place like this, where everything gets talked of, more or less, but for the circumstance that I possessed a nephew, who was about the handsomest young fellow that ever the sun shone upon. He was as fair as the Signora Morelli was dark; his eyes were blue, like violets, and his hair like gold; and, bless you, air, when these two young people first saw each other it was as clear a case of love at first sight as any other Romeo and Juliet, and just as natural as the flame between fire and tow.

"My nephew—his name was Reginald, and we called him Rex for short—was the organist of the little church over yonder, and the young lady sang in the choir, though she was such a grand one. She had a voice like an angel, and she used to say that God gave women such voices to sing His praises.

"In that way the two young people first met, and their acquaintance progressed rapidly, as you may suppose. The cousin to whom the Signorina was engaged used to come to church with her. I reckon that Italian fellow loved the girl in his fierce way as well as he could ever love anything, though it was thought he cared most about her money.

"Of course, he was as jealous as a Turk, and if looks could have killed, poor Rex would not have lived long to be his rival. But neither my brave Rex nor Miss Bianca cared a bit for the Signor's black looks; and then, you must know, the young lady never really agreed to the engagement. It was all made up by her relatives, and she always declared she would die rather than marry her cousin, declaring boldly that she loved Rex Haywood, and would never marry any other man.

"For my own part, I must own that I often trembled and turned cold at the looks that scowling, black-eyed Italian used to throw at my nephew; but when I used to warn the daring young fellow, he just answered with a shrug or laugh, and once he added,—

"This time next year, uncle, Bianca will be my wife, in spite of all their black looks, for she will be of age then, and that will end the guardianship of as black-hearted a pair as ever had power over an angel. How they ever dared to bring her here is more than I can imagine; but, of course, they have some powerful hold on her property in her native land, or they never would have taken the risk to bring her to a free country like this; and then they hoped she would have been homesick and lonely, and more easily broken to their will in a strange land. But they didn't count on me, you see, 'he finished off, with a gay laugh. 'It didn't occur to them that this country produces enterprising young men.'

"And, with his bright face shining with triumph and merriment, he hurried away to the church to practise his music for the next Sunday. But it was a very different music that he played when that sad day came, for on the very next morning I tolled the bell for Bianca Morelli, who had been found cold and still and white when her maid entered to dress her for breakfast. This was a Friday, and the funeral was set for Sunday, and you may be sure, in a place like this, there was plenty of talk about the sudden death and the hurried burial. But my nephew—poor Rex!—said nothing. He seemed turned to stone, but he played the most beautiful music that ever was heard in our church for the funeral service of the girl he loved; and, though they wouldn't allow him to go near the grand mahogany coffin in the church, I took care he should help me to lower it into the grave, and he stood beside me and dropped a great bunch of red roses down on to it as I began to shovel in the earth. Well, well, my poor Rex! I hope I may

never see such a face of despair again; and as I glanced at him from time to time I felt sure that his would be the next grave I should fill in.

"It was late that night, and I was just thinking of going to bed, though Rex hadn't come home; and I was mighty uneasy about him, when I heard the click of the door down-stairs as it opened and shut, and then I recognized his step, quick and hurried, as he came up-stairs—not a bit like the slow, dragging steps of the last two nights, but even lighter and quicker than it used to be; and I hadn't done wondering when the door opened, and the next moment he was beside me—wild, haggard, pale as death, and with his great blue eyes almost starting from his head! I'm not a nervous man, but I jumped up, worse scared than if I had seen a ghost. Before I could utter a word, for my voice failed me, Rex caught me hard by the arm and whispered, hoarsely:

"Don't speak, uncle, but just listen. Bianca isn't dead. I hope and believe she is not dead! Look!—read!" and he held before my eyes a scrap of paper, on which was scrawled these words:

"Rex, my darling, if I die, or seem to die, believe them not! Have me taken from the coffin within twelve hours of my burial, and all may yet be well. You will not fail me, dearest. Adieu!

"I read this extraordinary message over more than once before I took in its meaning, but as it flashed on me, I saw as well as Rex how little time we had to lose, and I forestalled his words.

"Come on, in Heaven's name!" I whispered. 'It must be close on twelve o'clock, and as safe as it will ever be for such a work. Fortunately, it's a pitch black night, and all the moon there was has gone hours ago. Come on!'

"While I spoke I found a little dark lantern, and we were already descending the stairs, and next moment we were stealing through the churchyard, with my pick and shovel in hand, which I had caught up as we passed by the outhouse where I kept them. It was terrible work; but in less time than I had ever used a spade before the newly-made grave was opened, the coffin rifled of its precious contents, which Rex and I carried to our home, wrapped up in a huge shawl which I had brought for the purpose. Eh, my! But it was the uncanniest night's work that ever I did since the hour I was born! We laid the body on my bed, and we chafed the cold, white hands, and listened in vain at the pulseless heart. But I saw no sign of life. She was as beautiful as a figure of alabaster and as lifeless, for aught that I could see; but Rex declared that she was not dead. So, as it was necessary that I should restore the empty coffin and fill in the grave again, I was obliged to leave him there, on his knees beside her, wildly kissing the poor, cold hands and calling on her to open her lovely eyes to see her lover by her. But I had no hope that anything but some fearful trouble would come of it, and marvelling and terrified as to what might be the end of the business, I hastened away to the work that awaited me.

"But they were right, and like a stupid old man I was wrong; for when I returned the trance-like sleep was broken, and the soul had awakened within that apparently lifeless form, and the lovers sat holding each other's hands, her head resting on his shoulder, while he sought to calm the fearful agitation which had taken possession of her now that she began to realize the horror of all that had happened. Ah! that was a brave girl, and a story-writer might fill a volume with her history and all she went through in those few months from the time of her first meeting with Rex till this awful night. But I must cut it short, for the night is coming on. To be brief, then: She had never told Rex half, or indeed a tenth part, of what she suffered with those wicked relations of hers, especially the cousin who wanted to marry her.



"At last their persecution reached a point when she could bear no more, and she discovered a plot by which she was to be hurried away to Italy, unknown to any one, and she knew well that she would never see Rex again in this world if this plan should be carried out. She was in despair. The Italian saw that she had discovered the plot, and she was immediately locked in her room, and all communication with the outer world cut off. Even her maid was in the pay of her relatives, as she knew, but the girl seemed to love her personally, and, driven to the last extremity, she found herself obliged to make a confidant of her, and to trust her life to this girl's discretion. She proved worthy, and gave her entire assistance to her young mistress. They concocted the desperate plan, which, by means of some mysterious Italian drug, they managed to carry out, with such result as I have described; and while I was still listening to a story more wonderful than any romance I had ever read this same faithful servant joined us.

"I found the door open," she said to the Signorina, "and hearing voices, knew all was well, and came directly here."

"But it was easy to see from the young lady's agitation that all was not well; and I guessed that if some change was not coming soon she was in danger of dying in earnest from excitement, and consequent exhaustion. My mind was speedily made up. I knew our good minister to be one good man picked out of ten thousand, and I was soon at his bedside, telling him the whole story while I helped him to dress. Never have I seen a man more dazed; but he soon took in the situation, and helped us out of our perplexity. He went with me directly, and a special licence was obtained at once by Rex, so that next day the young couple were married and driven by me (in the minister's one-horse shay) to a distant railway station, where they took the first train for London. Of course I need not say that Maria, the maid, accompanied them. She had proved herself invaluable in bringing clothes for her mistress and a box of valuable jewels on which Rex raised a large sum of money when they reached London.

"The next day there was a great hue and cry over the disappearance of Maria, whom the Italians called a thief and a monster of ingratitude; but they never suspected the real cause of the girl's running away. All this happened years ago, sir; but I hear from my nephew now that his wife is at length so strong and well that they are going to make their appearance before the Italian cousin and claim the Signorina's great fortune, which that villain has been enjoying ever since his return to Italy. I don't doubt but there will be a great time over it, but we will be able to prove our story—for there is the empty coffin below there, and the living occupant; myself, who played such an important part, and the minister who married them, thank Heaven! is still alive and hearty. And now good evening sir; I've my work to finish, but I suppose you don't wonder now that I laugh when I look at that handsome white marble headstone!"

G. H. S.

God bless the cheerful person—man, woman, or child, old or young, illiterate or educated, handsome or homely. Over and above every social trait stands cheerfulness. What the sun is to nature, what God is to the stricken heart which knows how to lean upon him, are cheerful persons in their silent mission, brightening up society around them with the happiness beaming from their faces.

A SPECIAL coinage for the Congo Free State is being struck in Belgium. The coins will be issued in silver, nickel, and copper, to the amount of £1,000,000. King Leopold's portrait will ornament one side of the coin, with the inscription "Leopold II., King of the Belgians, Sovereign of the Congo State," while the value of the coin will appear in large distinct characters on the other side.

## LORD OF HER LOVE.

—X—

### CHAPTER XXIII.

SADIE remembers nothing after that sudden swerve, that roll of distant thunder, that sharp jerk and horrible sensation of falling to the ground, till she opens her eyes and sees Niel's face bending over, white and drawn with the intensity of his anxiety.

"Where am I?" she asks, vaguely.

"You are quite safe now, my darling, thank Heaven! Oh, thank Heaven!" he answers, huskily.

And then a soft hand is laid on her brow, and some gentle fingers brush aside her curls.

"Is that you, Bee?" she asks, feebly.

"Mrs. Dalrymple will be here directly," a woman's voice answers; then, looking at Niel, Sybil Warner adds, "I think I hear them coming. Had you not better go and meet her? She may be alarmed."

She wants to have one moment alone with Sadie.

Niel rises at once.

"She is not harmed?" he asks again.

"You are quite, quite sure?"

Sybil smiles faintly.

"I am quite sure," she replies.

Niel bends over his wife and kisses her twice on the lips.

"Sadie," he says, most tenderly, "this lady has saved your life at great risk to herself. You—you will thank her, my dearest one, will you not?"

Sadie at once stretches out her hand, weak and nerveless though it is, and Sybil takes it, kneeling in her graceful way beside the pile of logs on which they have laid Sadie.

It is only a hut, but it has served as a shelter from the rain for his darling, and it is better to Niel than any palace at this moment.

"I will not listen to any thanks!" Sybil cries, quickly. "I am sufficiently repaid by the success that crowned my efforts. It is fortunate I have strong wrists. Now go, Lord Ardean—go and warn Mrs. Dalrymple that Lady Ardean has had an accident, or she will be alarmed."

"Yes, go, Niel, dear!" Sadie murmurs.

And with one backward glance, full of love and anxiety, Niel goes out into the rain.

Sybil still holds Sadie's hand; her own right one is hanging by her side.

"Now for my last coup," she says to herself. Out loud she asks, gently,—

"May I help you to rise, Lady Ardean, or do you feel more comfortable like that? I am afraid your husband fears you have really hurt yourself. You are not in pain?"

"No, oh no!" Sadie answers, hurriedly.

"I—I am only shaken. I will sit up. How good of you to help me! I can never thank you enough for what you have done. But for you I—I should be lying out there, perhaps dead, perhaps a cripple. Ah! you have been most noble, most—"

"I said I would not listen to thanks, and I will not break my resolution," Sybil laughs, rather shortly. "Let me help you."

She stretches out both her hands, and Sadie puts hers into them. Just as she is drawn into an upright position, however, Sybil staggers back with a smothered groan, and her right arm drops to her side.

"What is it? You are hurt!" Sadie cries, her own strength reviving at sight of the other's weakness. "Niel! Niel! Quick, come here!"

Niel rushes in wildly, just in time to catch Sybil Warner in his arms, as she falls in a heavy faint—or, at all events, a very good semblance of one.

"She is hurt, and through me!" Sadie cries, in distress. "Oh! Niel, dear, what—"

But a welcome interruption comes at this moment, for Bee runs in.

"Sadie, my darling, where are you?" she

exclaims. "Thank Heaven, you are not injured. I—"

Then she stands still, as if she were petrified, as her eyes rest on Niel, gently placing Sybil Warner on the pile of logs, and both Sadie and he bending over her.

"What—what is the matter?" Bee asks, in rather husky tones.

Sadie looks round.

"Oh, Bee!" she says, agitatedly, "this lady saved my life, and she is hurt; I—I am afraid seriously hurt!"

"Let me see," Mrs. Dalrymple answers; and, gathering her habit in her hand, she advances to the group. "Don't kneel there, Sadie," she says, almost harshly, "you will get cold." It hurts her to see her brother near this woman, and Sadie's sweet face full of anxiety on her account. "Niel," she adds, "put Sadie on my horse and take her home. I will stay with—this lady. The rain has stopped now, and you will reach Knarlsborough before the next shower comes down. You can send the brougham for us. Lord Grafford will remain with me, and Thomas can lead Bonny Bell."

Bee has never spoken so dictatorially before, and Niel understands her. He gives her one grateful glance, and moves to obey her.

Sybil, lying with closed eyes and just faintly moving lips, listens to this with a passion of anger and hatred towards Bee Dalrymple; then she almost forgets her rôle, and smiles in triumph, as Sadie breaks in quickly,—

"No, no, Bee! I cannot leave this lady. You go, and send the brougham for us. Niel, you must let me stay!"

She is busy touching Sybil's lips with some brandy that Lord Grafford has produced from a flask that he fortunately has with him. Bee is silent, but only for an instant.

"Sadie is not strong enough; this is no place for her," she says pointedly to her brother.

Niel looks troubled; he does not know what to do, but he feels that Bee is right, and so he moves up to his wife.

"I think, my darling, you had better come home. Bee can manage this sort of thing better than you, and you ought to rest after such a fall as you have had."

Sadie looks up at him.

"I could not go, dearest," she answers, gently. "Think, Niel, she saved my life; but for her I might be dead. I am all right now, and I will not leave her till I see her better. Bee, dear, do go home, and send a doctor back."

At these words Sybil nearly frowns. She cannot allow this; it would spoil all her plans. A strange doctor would soon discover how little was the matter with her. She has other arrangements than this.

Fortunately Niel comes unconsciously to her rescue.

"No! our best plan is to drive her home, wherever that may be. I do not think she is seriously injured. I think she has merely fainted from excitement, and the nervousness of the moment!"

"She shall come back with me to Knarlsborough," Sadie says, decidedly. "We don't know where she lives, and the proper place for her is with us till she recovers. Lord Grafford, will you ride to Knarlsborough at once, and send the brougham?"

Sadie is quite hurt with Bee, and thinks her most unfeeling. She little knows the anxiety and pain this affair is causing Mrs. Dalrymple's staunch, loving heart. Lord Grafford goes at once, and obeying a sign from Bee, Neil goes too.

"I will stay here," Mrs. Dalrymple says; and so, despite the fact that she is growing tired already, there is nothing for it but for Sybil to continue insensible until the carriage is brought.

When they are alone Sadie looks back at her sister-in-law.

"This is not like you, Bee," she says reproachfully. "You are usually so kind, so tender-hearted. Why cannot you be sympa-

thetic over this poor lady? Don't you understand she has saved my life?"

Sybil holds her breath.

What will Bee reply. It is very evident that Sadie has no notion that the woman she is nursing so tenderly is the one over whom Niel nearly broke his heart five years ago.

Bee remains silent for a moment. Truth to tell, she doubts this fainting fit as much as she doubts the genuineness of Sadie's fall, and Sybil's courage in saving her; but she feels this is not the time or place to speak, and so make no reply. Sadie cannot comprehend what has come to her, and her own generous, grateful heart recoils from what seems to her such peculiar behaviour.

After that they do not speak, and Sadie occupies herself with bathing Sybil's face with brandy and chafing her hands. The light inside the hut has grown dusky, and so she cannot see Sybil very plainly; but to her it seems as though this woman who has saved her life is lying dead before her.

She is the most comfortable of the three, even in all her deeply-roused anxiety, for Bee is overwhelmed with mortification and fear, and Sybil is wretchedly placed, lying on the hard logs in a constrained attitude, pretending to be still in a deep faint.

The sound of approaching wheels comes like a strain of music, to her ears at least, and she thinks she can safely begin to show signs of returning consciousness. She opens her eyes and moves her head slowly from side to side. Groping with her left hand she is careful to keep her right down by her side.

"What is it?" she murmurs, and Sadie bends over, rejoicing to hear her speak.

"You are safe with friends," she says, in her sweet, low voice.

"Friends!" she repeats to herself, with a shudder. Sybil seems to guess by intuition what she is feeling, and she takes a delight in tormenting her.

"Friends!" she says faintly. "Ah! thank Heaven! I have had a terrible dream, and oh! my arm, my arm!" She ends in a moan; then, as Sadie stoops over her again, she says very feebly, "kiss me; I—"

Sadie puts her lips to the uplifted ones, and Bee clenches her hand in disgust and helplessness.

"What shall I do?" she asks herself over and over again, as Niel and Lord Grafford come in, and Sadie hurriedly explains that Sybil's right arm is hurt, and entreats them to carry her at once to the carriage.

Sybil is a tall, fine woman, but Niel and Lord Grafford are very strong, and together they lift her easily and place her in the brougham. Sadie gets in after her, and seeing Sybil's lips move she bends her ear, then looks round.

"She asks for Dr. Douglas, Niel. Send for him to come at once to Knaresborough!"

"You will pass near his house; why not stop there?" Bee suggests quietly. Poor girl, in her great anxiety she does not see how foolishly she is acting. By showing such an antagonistic front to Sybil she rouses both Niel's and Sadie's sympathy, and does more harm than she can imagine.

Sadie gives her another reproachful glance.

"Send to Dr. Douglas, dear," she says to Niel; and then the door is shut, and she is bowling through the country lanes alone with Sybil Warner; for Bee has refused to accompany them, declaring most truthfully she prefers to ride.

To sit face to face with that woman is more than Bee can stand. She does not know how or why, but she seems to feel that they have all been caught in some clever trap, from which she can see no decent way of escape.

Niel assists her to mount. He looks worried, and as he throws himself into the saddle, he says, "Grafford, look after Mrs. Dalrymple; I shall ride on quickly."

"Where are you going?" Bee asks hurriedly.

"To fetch Dr. Douglas myself. I shall be much faster than the servants."

"It is an odd thing," Bee says, in a choked sort of way, "to choose Dr. Douglas. No one knows him; he has only just come here. Why not send old Dr. Lithgow, whom every one knows?"

"It is not our province to question in such a case, Bee," Niel replies, his brows contracting at her tone. "Miss Warner chooses Dr. Douglas. He may be her usual medical attendant. At any rate, she has saved my darling's life, and the least I can do is to assist her now."

And thereupon he touches up his horse, and rides quickly away, leaving Bee and Lord Grafford together. The young Viscount sees that there is something very wrong; but he is helpless to comfort Mrs. Dalrymple, and they turn to ride back to Knaresborough in complete silence.

"I would have given all I possess in the world," Bee cries passionately, "to have prevented this." Then she adds, in some surprise, "What are you doing there, Lord Grafford?" for the young man has dismounted, and is stooping to look at something on the ground.

"I saw this shining," he says, holding out a small bracelet, which Bee at once recognizes as belonging to Sybil. "Funny it should be lying in this hedge, isn't it?"

"Very funny," Bee agrees; and her eyes go to the spot spot he indicates, and rest on a series of small footprints, that prove conclusively that some one has recently rushed down the bank into the lane. "It was just here Sadie fell, was it not?"

"Oh! no," Lord Grafford answers, as he mounts again. "She fell there, quite close to the hut."

Bee is silent, but she gazes at the footprints, and she reads in them confirmation of her doubt. "Instead of saving her life," she thinks to herself, "Sybil Warner was the cause of Sadie's fall; it is an awful thing. If I only knew what to do—if, if, Ph—, Mr. Brewer, were only here. If I am not very much mistaken, mischief will follow on this day's work—mischief and misery."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

SADIE and Sybil Warner do not talk much in the drive home to Knaresborough. The one is too deeply occupied with her thoughts, her plots, and her marvellous success, and the other is dwelling on her anxiety, and the escape she has just had.

As the carriage bowls up the splendid, rather gloomy avenues, Sybil rouses herself.

"It must be neck or nothing," she says inwardly. "Having got so far I must not fail; and if Douglas only acts his part as well as I do mine, I shall be an inmate of Knaresborough Castle for some weeks to come!"

Sadie seeing her eyes open bends forward.

"Do you feel better?" she asks tenderly. Bee's strange manner has roused a spirit of chivalrous sympathy for this woman—her saviour, as she calls her.

Sybil tries to answer, but a groan only escapes her lips, and as the carriage stops she is once more lying silent and still in a state of apparent unconsciousness. Sadie has all her wits about her. She gets out of the brougham, gathers her habit in her hand, and commands the servants to lift the lady from the carriage, and to bear her carefully up to one of the numerous and magnificent rooms. The housekeeper is quickly on the spot, and Sybil is carried slowly and gently up the wide caken staircase to a room which she determines shall be her home for many days to come.

"Send Mary to me," Sadie orders, as she is alone with the housekeeper, and stands looking down anxiously at Sybil's pale face. Miss Warner has naturally a very clear, pallid skin, and her emotion and long-constrained attitude have really rendered her even a shade whiter. So, with her long black lashes religiously fixed downwards, and her lips drawn

tight, she presents a very fair imitation of a woman enduring great pain. At all events, it impresses Sadie, poor child, whose sweet, gentle nature is torn with reproach and regret at the sight of this suffering caused by her.

The housekeeper quickly obeys her lady's commands, and Mary, who still remains as maid to Sadie, comes in.

She looks astonished to see her mistress bending over the silent form, but does all Sadie tells deftly and unquestioningly.

"We will do no more till the doctor has been," Sadie says after a while, and at that moment the welcome sound of footsteps in the corridor outside announce that the medical man has come.

At a sign from Sadie, Mary opens the door and admits him. Niel is standing out in the passage, looking worried and rather pale. He turns and goes to a windowed niche in the corridor to wait till Sadie joins him.

She comes almost immediately, and Mary follows her.

Regardless of the maid's presence, Niel folds his arms round his wife, and holds her close to his heart.

"My precious one!" he murmurs, passionately; "my darling, thank Heaven, you are safe. You are not hurt, Sadie, you are sure? Not a bruise or a scratch?"

"Not a single one." Sadie smiles faintly—his anxious, loving tones are like music in her ears. "But, Niel, I am afraid that lady is going to be very ill. The doctor shook his head. He would not let me stay in the room. Oh! I do hope she is not seriously injured."

"I do not think she is, my dearest."

Niel comforts her gently, yet with a sense of depression and a premonition of coming evil lying strong upon his heart, now that he stands with Sadie nestling unconsciously to him. He suddenly realises the disagreeable position in which he is placed; and he wishes, though inhospitally is certainly not one of his faults, that he had taken Bee's advice, and insisted on having Sybil Warner conveyed to her own domicile, wherever that might be. Truth to tell, Niel has not been impressed at all favourably by the appearance of this Dr. Douglas. There is something, an indefinable something, about him that makes a man like Lord Arden recoil from him, though the doctor has done nor said nothing beyond the rarest conventionalities. It is one of those extraordinary impressions that come without any cause, and, despite all common sense, reasoning, it remains.

"We must see Dr. Douglas when he comes out, Niel," Sadie whispers; "but we can wait for him downstairs."

He lets her draw him away, and in the hall they meet Bee, who, has just dismounted, and is drawing off her gloves.

"What news?" she asks Niel, abruptly.

Before Niel can reply Dr. Douglas runs down the stairs, and Sadie steps forward eagerly.

"I regret to say Miss Warner is very ill," he says, in sharp, short tones. "Her arm is seriously sprained; in fact, I am not sure that a small bone is not broken. She is altogether in a shattered condition."

Sadie has turned pale. In her eagerness to hear the doctor's opinion she does not even catch the name of the woman whom she innocently regards as her rescuer from the jaws of death. Niel stands silent for a moment, and Sadie is asking another question, when Bee breaks in, concisely and coldly.

"Is it your honest opinion, Dr. Douglas, that it would harm this lady to be moved?"

For an instant the man flashes a look at her, but his face is imperturbable as he replies,—

"I regret to say, madame, that it is. I am just going to my brougham to fetch the necessary bandages for the arm. Of course the patient may feel easier when I have arranged that, and if you wish it, I will endeavour to have her moved; but—"

There is an undoubted tone of surprise and



reproach in Dr. Douglas's voice as he pauses, and it strikes home to Niel and Sadie.

"No, no; certainly not," Lord Ardean says quickly. "We cannot hear of that; can we, my darling?"

Sadie puts her hand on his arm and looks steadily at Bee's flushed, anxious face.

"Indeed we cannot," she agrees. "If Mrs. Dalrymple has forgotten already what I owe this lady, I am not so culpable. I refuse to allow your patient to be moved, Dr. Douglas, until you give the necessary permission. Please come and tell us how she is, and what you desire about her before you go. We shall be in the library, and very anxious till you come."

And, so saying, Sadie slips her arm through Niel's and leads him across the hall, without vouchsafing another look or word to poor Bee, who is nearly ready to cry from mortification and misery.

She will not let Sadie go, however, without one more effort. Gathering up her habit she runs after her brother.

"Sadie—Sadie," she says, in a choked, nervous sort of way. "I—I want to speak to you, dear."

Sadie stops at once.

"Go on to the library, Niel," she says, quietly; then, as the two girls are alone, she adds, "Well, Bee?"

Bee draws her into a corner of the great hall.

"Sadie," she whispers, agitatedly, "do you know what you have done? Do you know who this woman is?"

"I only know she saved my life, and that I shall be grateful to her as long as I am spared to live."

Bee puts up her hand and jerks open her linen collar, as if the restraint of it is more than she can bear.

"Sadie," she says, hurriedly, "you have thought me strange just now, I know. Don't you understand that something had made me so curious? My darling, I would not hurt you or vex you for the world, but I cannot bear to see you and that woman together for an instant. You know her well by name, Sadie; she is the woman who nearly wrecked Niel's life. She is Sybil Warner!"

Sadie starts, the colour flushes to her face, then fades for an instant; her very heart stands still, and the vague, jealous feeling that came to her that summer night, on the sands at Tidemouth, rushes into being again; but it lives only for a moment; the next her real, generous self rises above all.

"I cannot forget that she saved my life, Bee," she says, gently.

"Saved your life!" Bee repeats, bitterly. "How do we know that she did this? How do we know what happened? Your horse swerves, is frightened suddenly by something or somebody from the hedge; you fall, and Sybil Warner pretends that she rescues you, while in all pro—"

"Bee" (Sadie has grown very pale), "Bee," what—what are you saying? Your dislike for Miss Warner has got the better of you. How can you be so wicked? You—you frighten me! I do not know you as you are! Thank Heaven, such terrible thoughts do not come into my mind! No matter what she is—what she has done. Sybil Warner saved my life, and henceforth she will always find a staunch, a ready friend in me!"

And, so saying, Sadie turns and leaves Bee standing alone, the bitter tears rolling down her face.

The late days of October, which are so pleasant in the country, despite the widespread decay marked on every side, are not equally enjoyable in a large city.

Philip Brewer, however, has been too busy to take much note of the climate. He has been toiling like a veritable Trojan. His long sojourn in the paths of frivolity and folly has given him a zest for his labours which sometimes surprises himself.

With his new mood, with his returned

ambition has come a vague sweet hope, a hope which he hardly dares let himself realize, even exist, but which does exist for all that, and spurs and beckons him on, like an angel, to higher and brighter things.

He gives many a sigh when he lets his mind wander to Knaresborough, with its inmates; but he sighs still deeper over his wasted opportunities and lost years, for he can meet his friends again, but his chances are gone for ever.

However, when he is once more in the swim, with very little time that he can in all truth honestly call his own, Philip Brewer resolutely turns his back on his past, and for the first time since he was a boy begins to understand what it is to be happy and contented.

His own people, who had a curious knack of forgetting him and not recognizing him in the street, commence to look him up when rumours of his wonderful talent as a literary man reach their ears; and though Philip realizes that their affection is not exactly genuine, he welcomes it as a necessary adjunct to a successful career.

But it is to a certain small shrine that he goes every day and stands gratefully to acknowledge the impetus which has pushed him on to his present course.

Three portraits on his mantel-shelf, that is all; but there is one picture out of the three that is dearer to Philip Brewer than his life.

Underneath the bright piquante pretty face is written these words:

"Always your sincere friend, Bee Dalrymple."

And no strain of heavenly music is sweeter to Philip than that one line sounds in his ears as he repeats it softly to himself.

Of Sadie he thinks most gratefully and tenderly, with a strong longing to do something for her to wipe out any share he may have had in helping Jack Ronalds to ruin her. He feels with a great throb of thankfulness that his conscience need not really reproach him at all on this point, but still the desire to assist and protect this girl lives and grows each day.

It was her offer of friendship that first drew him from the downward path; it was through her that he met Bee Dalrymple, and it is to her that he tells himself he owes all the happiness that the future sketches out before him.

He hears constantly from Knaresborough, for he never misses writing to Sadie or Niel, and now and then he sends a long chatty letter to Bee, with some one or other of his articles that he thinks will interest her, and the answers that come are first kissed most fervently, and then locked away in a drawer, as too precious for the light of day.

Towards the very end of October and the first few days of November Philip is busy finishing a series of letters for an American paper, and has only had time to despatch a hurried line or two to Sadie, remarking, nevertheless, with some surprise, the fact that for the first time he has had no answer from either Bee or herself.

"It is very odd," he says to himself, as he runs up to his rooms late in the afternoon of one of these early November days. "I hope nothing is wrong. I think I will write again."

But when he reaches his den he finds an envelope addressed in Bee's well-loved hand awaiting him, and he pounces on it with an energy that would have surprised his business acquaintances, who were apt to sum him up as a somewhat sleepy and languid individual.

The very beginning astonishes him, for it is dated that morning from Claridge's Hotel, and his surprise deepens as he reads, though his pleasure nearly overwhelms all other feeling.

"DEAR MR. BREWER (Bee writes),—

"I am staying at the above for a few days until my house in — square is made habitable and comfortable. My husband's aunt is here with me, and she joins with me

in begging you to take pity on two lone females, and give us the pleasure of your company at dinner. You need not trouble to answer this if you think of coming, but will you send a wire if you are engaged, as we shall then not be dis—? I mean, we shall know then not to expect you.

"Yours very sincerely,

"BEE DALRYMPLE.

"P.S.—Do come. I want you very badly."

The colour mounts to Philip's worn face, and his heart thrills suddenly with an exquisite sense of happiness, which, however, melts away as he realises that something is wrong, and that Bee is in trouble. It is hardly necessary to say that every prior engagement he has is cancelled on the spot, and that he rushes off as soon as he has dressed to the hotel, and the woman who makes the sunshine of his life.

Bee is alone in the sitting-room when he enters, and comes forward with both hands outstretched.

"Oh, Ph—, Mr. Brewer," she says, in a choked, dim sort of way. "How glad I am to see you! It is so good of—"

"Good" Philip is beginning, and then he releases her hands and is bowing his acknowledgment of the introduction to Lady Meltone, an old lady with white hair and a benevolent face.

He gives his arm to her and leads her into dinner, but he has not much appetite, and he finds it hard to chat easily with Bee's face opposite to him, so white and troubled as to make his heart lie heavy in his breast.

He little knows what a delight it is to the poor girl to see him again. She is longing to open out all her worries to him, but has to wait till dinner is over and Lady Meltone comfortably ensconced in an arm-chair. Then she artfully suggests music, and beckons Philip to come and sit beside the piano.

"She will sleep placidly for hours," she whispers, and then she begins to play softly until she sees the white head droop against the cushion, and turning to Philip she holds out her small hand.

"I have wanted to see you, oh! so badly," she says, tears rising to her eyes.

Philip clasps her hand so tightly he almost hurts it; but she feels nothing but joy and gladness at his touch, at the knowledge of his presence.

"I am in great trouble," she says hurriedly.

"And you want me to help you. Now?" he returns gently and quietly.

She sighs.

"I almost fear even you can do nothing in this case," she says, with unconscious flattery in the words and tone "even you." How sweet they sound to him!

"Try me—tell me all. Why are you here? What has happened?"

"I have quarrelled with Sadie. I have left Knaresborough; for the future I shall live alone in my own house."

"Quarrelled! You; good heavens, I can scarcely believe my ears."

He is still clasping her hand; with a slight flush and a glance at Lady Meltone, who is sleeping most profoundly, and considerably she turns to him, and hurriedly tells him of the accident that happened to Sadie.

"You have heard of Sybil Warner?" she says, as she describes how Sadie insisted on carrying Miss Warner back to Knaresborough and keeping her there.

"I told you about her, did I not? Yes, yes; I know I did. You understand all I felt, don't you, Philip?"

In her eagerness she does not notice how glibly she speaks his name; but he does, and his heart leaps passionately at the word "Philip."

"I was almost out of my mind. I don't remember exactly what I said to Sadie. I fear I must have been very foolish, for, instead of putting her on her guard, I only succeeded in making her dreadfully angry with me. She refused to speak to me, and even Niel changed towards me. They thought, they still think,



["IS IT YOUR HONEST OPINION, DR. DOUGLAS, THAT IT WOULD HARM THIS LADY TO BE MOVED?"]

I am very wicked because I maintain that Sybil Warner did not save Sadie's life; and because I doubt the genuineness of this illness. I was patient at first, but nearly three weeks have gone by, Philip, and I can bear it no longer. Sadie refuses to let me come near her; she is always with Sybil, nursing her and sitting in her room, when the very idea nearly drives me wild.

Bee's voice chokes, and she turns her head on one side to hide the tears that will come.

"I mistrust Sybil Warner. I know, I am sure, that harm, great harm and misery, must come from all this; and yet neither Niel or Sadie will be warned. I—I have done all I can, but now I think it best to leave them. I will never speak willingly to that woman again; and it maddens me to be under the same roof with her. Please don't mind me, Mr. Brewer. I—I am stupid, I—"

"Stupid! my dar—" Philip checks himself. He feels it is not manly to press his feelings on her just at this moment; but his tones comfort Bee. She draws her hand away and passes her delicate lace handkerchief over her wet eyes.

"What shall I do?" she asks imploringly.

Philip goes into the whole matter, and tries to console her. He urges everything he can think of to show her how very feeble Sybil's power can be.

"What harm can she do now?" he ends with. "They are married; she cannot separate them!"

"She is poisonous!" Bee says with a shiver. "She will make them miserable in some way."

Philip is silent for a moment.

"Is there anything you wish me to do?" he asks, after awhile.

"Yes," Bee answers promptly. "I want you if it is possible to go down to Knaresborough, and stay for a time. Sadie has asked you so repeatedly, and I shall be so much happier if I know you are there."

He clasps her hands again in his.

"Then I will do as you ask; and to prevent any delay, I will take Lady Ardean at her word and go down at once, simply sending a wire to announce my arrival. Does that please your ladyship?"

"And—and this won't harm your work?" Bee says, with a bitter break in her voice.

"What is all the work in the world compared to a wish of yours!" Philip replies, tenderly. "Trust me. I will look after both these dear ones of yours. My power may be limited, but I may be able to do some good. We never can tell; and to know that I am pleasing you will be the greatest happiness I have had for some time."

Bee tries to loosen her hands, but he holds them faster.

"You know all I long to say, and dare not, Bee," he murmurs under his breath.

"Dare not!" she repeats, her cheeks flushing and paling with the emotion that fills her breast. "What—what do you mean, Philip?"

"My darling!" he says tenderly; "need you ask. Think of our different positions—think of what I have been, a wicked extravagant wretch who has wasted his chances."

With one of her impulsive movements, that make her so like a child, Bee wrests a hand from his and puts it on his lips.

"You must not; I will not let you, Philip!"

He kisses the little pink palm softly, and then releases it abruptly.

"This is not for me," he declares firmly, and is about to rise, when Bee stops him with a gesture.

"Won't you take my hand?" she asks.

He smiles faintly.

"Do not tempt me, Bee," he answers. "I must not just yet, my darling. Only," he goes on with growing eagerness, "only trust me, believe in me. Give me that precious blessing, and perhaps I may do something yet that will make me seem worthy in my own sight to

come to you, and ask you to take me for better and worse."

Bee's eyes are shining through her tears.

"And whenever you come, dear, I shall be ready," she says fervently. "Philip, I honour you now as much as I—I have always loved you."

Her head droops as these shy, sweet words are uttered; and Philip, bending his, kisses her little hand with a reverent passion that he is hardly conscious of.

Then he rises.

"I must go now," he says; "and to-morrow I will start for Knaresborough. I will write to you everyday, and all that lies in my power shall be done for your beloved ones."

"I know it, I know it!" Bee whispers, as she rises too.

Then their hands met, their eyes exchange a long glance of deep unfailing love and trust, and then Philip goes quickly away.

As the door closes Lady Meltone wakes with a start.

"Has Mr. Brewer gone?" she asks. "Dear me, I am sorry; he is a very nice young man, my dear. I like him very much."

Bee only smiles, but as she goes slowly to her room she lifts her own right to her lips, and kisses it softly.

"My darling!" she thinks to herself. "My own darling, thank Heaven we understand one another, and that you will be with Niel and Sadie, for now I shall have no further fear. You are there, and that is enough for me!"

(To be continued.)

A CANOE TRIP across the Channel has been made in a boat scarcely five feet long. The voyage from Dover to Calais took eleven hours, the canoeist using merely the ordinary double paddle, and being quite unaccompanied.





["I AM HELENA," SHE CRIED. "HOW IS IT I FIND YOU IN SUCH A SAD STATE?"]

NOVELLETTE.]

## A RASH MARRIAGE.

—O—

### CHAPTER VI.

HELENA could not trust herself to say farewell to Vane, so early next morning she started on her way home, not without some misgivings as to travelling alone in a country alive with the horrors of war. She was more fortunate than she could have hoped, however, and after some little delay in securing a passage, found herself at Marseilles, en route for England.

The excitement of the journey was a good thing for her in her present state of mind, and prevented her from brooding too deeply over her troubles. As a matter of fact, she tried her best to dismiss the thought of Lord Seagrave from her mind, but memory was too strong for her, and brought his image before her every hour of the day.

On reaching London she sent a telegram to Mrs. Travers, who was, of course, unaware of her intended arrival; and that same day she found herself at Woodlands—the name of the house they had taken together.

Something in the appearance of the house, as she drove up the approach, struck her as being strange, and unlike itself. When she was at home she always had the windows thrown open, and flowers in pots blossoming on the sills, but now all the blinds were down, the plants had withered for want of attention, and Mrs. Travers herself, when she came to the door to meet her, looked pale and woe-begone, while her dress, which was usually the very picture of neatness, had a curiously disordered air, as if its wearer's mind had been too preoccupied to give it any attention.

"Oh, Helena!" she cried, clasping her in her arms as she alighted, "I am so glad you

are come. I really don't know what I should have done if you had stayed away any longer!"

She burst into a passion of tears, and Helena, very much puzzled as to the meaning of her agitation, did her best to soothe her, and led her into the drawing-room, where tea was laid on a small wicker table in front of the fire.

"Now tell me what is the matter?" she said, after they had seated themselves.

"Have some tea first, and then you will be better able to bear it," moaned Mrs. Travers, who, like a good many others of her sex, had a firm belief in the virtues of tea.

The girl saw it would be best to humour her, so she poured out a cup, sipped it, and then repeated her question.

"Prepare yourself for the worst, my poor child!" was the startling reply, "for you cannot possibly imagine anything more awful than the catastrophe that has befallen us. We have both lost every halfpenny we possess!"

"What!" exclaimed Helena.

"It is true. The news came yesterday morning. The W— Bank has failed, the junior partner had been speculating, and his speculations all ended badly. He was found lying dead in his room, and it is believed he poisoned himself to escape exposure and punishment.

"Directly I heard of it I hurried off to W—, and saw Mr. Sanderson, the lawyer, and he told me he believed our case to be quite hopeless, for the bank would probably pay a dividend of only sixpence or a shilling in the pound."

The intelligence fell on Helena with unexpected force, for she had always imagined her fortune to be perfectly secure, and would as soon have doubted the stability of the Bank of England as the W— Bank. Still, she did not lose her presence of mind, or cry out as loudly against Fate as did her companion.

To the young the loss of money is never so terrible as it is to the old, and our heroine was not only young and strong, but possessed a confidence in herself that Mrs. Travers lacked.

"After all," she said, "things may not be so bad as you imagine. Of course, everything is in confusion just now, and the worst is made of it. Perhaps some remnant of our money may be saved."

Mrs. Travers shook her head despondingly.

"I am afraid not. It would not be so bad if only half our money was invested there; but the W— Bank gave such a good rate of interest, and was supposed to be so perfectly safe, that I actually sold everything I had out of the three per cents. in order to increase my income, and persuaded you to do the same. If it were only my own money I should not mind so much, but it is yours as well, and it is through me you have lost it."

Her self-reproach was very bitter, and she was so absorbed in this new trouble that she took very little interest in Helena's Egyptian experiences, and asked her few questions concerning them.

On consideration, the girl determined to tell her nothing of her meeting with Vane, as it would only have provoked comment, which it would have been painful for her to hear, and could have done no good, so Mrs. Travers remained in ignorance of the fact that husband and wife had seen each other again.

The next few weeks were taken up with visits to the lawyer and to the bank, but by the end of that time it was quite clear that very little would be saved from the wreck of their investments, and it became necessary for the two women to resolve on their future plan of action.

Of course they could not afford to live on at Woodlands; but, fortunately, their lease was just out, so there would be no difficulty in giving up the house.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Travers, one evening, when they were discussing ways and means.

"I suppose you would not care to apply to your husband?"

Helena made a hasty movement of negation.

"You see, he had a good slice of your fortune, and so it is clearly his duty to help you now that you require help," pursued the speaker, who would dearly have liked to see a reconciliation between husband and wife.

"If I were *starving* I would not apply to him!" declared the girl, firmly. "The money he had from me was a free gift; or, rather, given for a certain consideration, and as he discharged his part of the bargain, I have not the shadow of a claim upon him."

"Then," said Mrs. Travers, "will you come to America with me—at least, for a time? My brother has many times asked me to go over and live with him, but I have always refused, because I thought it might not be agreeable to his wife. Now that she is dead I shall accept his offer."

"It is by far the best thing you can do. As he is a widower, and has no children, you cannot be otherwise than welcome."

"As you would be, dear Helena."

"It is very good of you to say so, but the cases are widely different, and I very much doubt whether I should be happy if I ever depended on the bounty of any one—let alone a stranger. No, I must earn my living as best I can."

"But what shall you do?"

"Become a professional nurse, perhaps. I think the life would suit me, and I am sure I should like it."

"But it would be such hard work!"

"Beggars must not be choosers, and I shall have to do the work that I am best fitted for."

Mrs. Travers pondered some time, and then returned to the charge of trying to persuade Helena to take up her abode at her brother's house in New York. To this, however, the girl would not consent, but as a compromise she promised to go over to America with Mrs. Travers and stay there for six months—a plan which she mentally decided would be a good one, for it would provide her with the change and excitement that she felt were a necessity in helping her to forget Vane.

Then followed a busy time of arranging for the sale of the furniture—the proceeds of which provided both ladies with a little ready money and leaving the house. They took lodgings in London for a week or two before making final arrangements, and bought such things as they were likely to require on the journey, after which they engaged berths in a steamer that was advertised to sail the next week, and felt the satisfaction of knowing that their plans were now complete.

As Helena was returning to her lodgings, after doing some shopping on the day preceding that on which they were to sail, a curious accident befell her, which was destined to have a considerable influence on her future life. She was walking along Oxford-street, when a man stumbled against her, and then fell heavily to the ground at her feet.

Bending down to look at his face, to her horror she recognized William Compton, the son of her father's second wife—the man who had tried so hard to make her marry him years ago.

Of course, a crowd immediately collected, and there were various opinions hazarded, amongst them being the suggestion that the man must be drunk. But this was not the case, as Helena speedily ascertained; he was really and truly ill, and she fancied from the pinched look of his features that hunger had something to do with his prostrate condition.

All feelings of animosity that she might formerly have cherished faded from the girl's mind, and she thought of nothing but the fact of a fellow-creature lying before her in dire poverty and distress—a man who, moreover, might claim some distant connection with herself.

Without waiting to reflect she called a cab, and directed a policeman who was near to

help the prostrate man inside; then she sent to the nearest public-house for some brandy, which she administered; the result being that Compton opened his eyes and looked at her.

"Don't you know me, William?" she said, gently.

He shook his head. He had not seen her since her marriage, and the alteration that had taken place in her appearance completely prevented him from recognizing her.

"I am Helena—once Helena Markham!" she went on, after a moment's pause. "How is it I find you in such a sad state?"

He laughed harshly.

"Poverty!—a thing of which you know nothing. Why I haven't a penny to bless myself with, let alone to pay a doctor!"

"Have you been ill long?"

"Longer than I shall be ill in future. My time's nearly up."

He was interrupted by a fit of coughing, which left him too weak to talk, and Helena was shocked at his complete exhaustion.

"Where do you live?" she asked, presently.

"Nowhere! My landlady turned me out yesterday because I couldn't pay my rent, and I've been wandering about the streets ever since. I suppose I might have got in a hospital or the workhouse, but I'd as soon die as go in either."

"And where is your mother?"

"In Australia! but I don't know anything of her—whether she is alive or dead."

He sank back against the cushions, and seemed to fall into a semi-lethargic state, from which it would have been difficult to rouse him. Only one alternative occurred to Helena, which was to drive him to her lodgings, and this she adopted.

Mrs. Travers was naturally very much surprised at the arrival; but she was a kind-hearted woman, and at once, on hearing the details, approved of what Helena had done.

"Of course you could not have left him to die," she said; and then, more blankly, "but what of our journey to-morrow?"

"I cannot go, that is quite clear," returned the young girl; "but you must not be allowed to forfeit the passage money, and so you must make the journey alone. I will follow by another steamer directly William is well enough to be left."

Mrs. Travers did not like this arrangement at all; but, after all, she could not afford to lose her passage money, neither was she heartless enough to try and persuade Helena to leave the sick man to his fate; so the next day she bade her a tearful good-bye, and went to Liverpool, where she embarked in the *Gloriana*.

## CHAPTER VII.

WILLIAM COMPTON'S recovery, under Helena's care and attention, was very rapid, for the bad state into which he had fallen was due as much to neglect as anything else, and her nursing, even more than the doctor's prescriptions, soon made him convalescent.

Strange to say he showed very little gratitude to the girl, accepting her ministrations as if he had a right to them—as, indeed, he was of opinion that he had. He had never forgiven her refusal of his offers, and even at this length of time felt resentful at the way in which she had escaped him.

When she told him of the failure of the *W—* Bank, and her own comparative poverty, he said,—

"If you had married me nothing of the kind would have happened, for I should have looked after your fortune too carefully."

She laughed, quite believing that he would, indeed, have looked after her fortune very carefully; but whether his care would have prevented her losing it, was another matter entirely.

She was very kind to him, and not even his ungraciousness made her lose patience; the "cleansing fires" of her unfortunate love

had wrought their work, giving to her nature that essence of pure womanly tenderness which, perhaps, it had lacked before, and lending a crowning charm to her beauty, which made it perfectly irresistible.

By this time Compton was so far advanced on his way to recovery as to get up every day after breakfast, and read the paper in order to amuse himself. Helena, although she could ill afford it, got the *Telegraph* every morning, so that he should not feel dull; and, while he scanned its pages, she worked away at her knitting, while her thoughts went back to the man whose life was so strangely interwoven with her own.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Compton, one morning while they were respectively thus engaged, and as his companion looked up quickly from her work he added, "what was the name of the vessel in which your friend sailed?"

"The *Gloriana*—why?"

He did not reply, but gave vent to a low, expressive whistle.

"Is she mentioned there?" continued the girl, starting up in some alarm. "Let me see the paper."

He did not seem inclined to accede to her request; but Helena, fancying from his manner that there must be really something wrong, snatched the newspaper from him, and as her eyes ran swiftly along the headings of the columns, they rested on these words:—

"Terrible Disaster at Sea."

"Loss of the s.s. *Gloriana* with all lives."

"List of the dead."

And then followed a long line of names, foremost among which were her own and Mrs. Travers!

The news was quite true; the *Gloriana* had indeed gone down with all hands, and Helena Chisholm—who had booked and paid for her passage, but who had not sailed—was supposed to have perished with the rest of the fated crew.

Naturally she was both shocked and grieved by the idea of her old friend's death, and it gave her the strangest and most eerie sensation to see her own name there as one of the drowned.

Had Vane seen it, she wondered, and what had he said, as he believed himself to be free?

Suddenly, sitting there with the paper on her lap, and the tears that had welled up to her eyes for poor Mrs. Travers, dripping slowly on her white apron, a strange idea came to the girl. Why should she not let people continue to think her dead, and thus give her husband the liberty he craved?

She had no relatives, few friends—no one bound to her by very strong ties, in fact; and so her loss would not cause anyone much grief. She had not even her fortune to hamper her now, and in her efforts to gain her own living it might be even better to start under entirely new conditions.

The more she pondered over the idea the more it commended itself to her; and at last she started up, clenching her hands together, and exclaiming aloud,—

"Yes—I will do it!"

"Do what?" asked William Compton, who had been attentively watching her.

Her face clouded over at the question. She had forgotten his presence, and his very existence as well, and now that she was reminded of it, the consideration came that it would be necessary to take him into her confidence, and bind him over to secrecy.

Well, there was no help for it, and surely it was very little to ask in return for all the kindness she had shown him!

"I am going to ask you a favour," she said, turning to him—pale-faced, but very earnest, "and I want you to promise you will grant it."

"Tell me what it is first. I'm not the sort of fellow to buy a pig in a poke," was the elegant rejoinder.



"Well then, the fact is, I want to begin existence over again. I want to forget this"—holding up her wedding ring—"and call myself a spinster once more."

Compton laughed harshly.

"So that you may get a rich husband, I suppose?"

"No—in order to escape one," she replied calmly, although her cheek flushed crimson under the insulting suggestion, "I shall continue my nursing, and shall stand a far better chance of getting on well as a single woman than as a married one separated from her husband. The promise I wish you to make is that you will not disclose the fact that I did not sail in the *Gloriana*."

He reflected a moment.

"So far as that goes I am willing to promise, but does no one else know of it—the landlady of this house, for example?"

"No; she interests herself very little in her lodgers' concerns, and beyond my name being 'Christabel,' and my rent paid regularly, I doubt whether she knows anything at all about me."

"What should you call yourself?"

"Monica Burn."

Compton seemed surprised at the promptness with which she made the announcement, and she added, in explanation,

"Monica is my second name, and 'Burn' was my mother's maiden name, so there is nothing strange in the conjunction."

"I suppose you'll be wanting to get rid of me soon," observed the young man, after a pause, during which he had revolved various matters in his mind.

"I am afraid my money won't hold out much longer," Helena responded, in some embarrassment. "Of course I don't wish you to go until you are quite well enough to be alone."

"I see; that means the sooner I take my hook the better pleased you'll be. Well, I'll leave the end of this week, though goodness knows how I shall support myself!"

His companion was silent. If she, a girl, could earn her living, surely he ought to be able to do so?

He had very fair abilities, and his knowledge of French and German would stand him in good stead if he tried for a clerkship; indeed, he was qualified to take a very decent situation, only that his dissolute habits prevented his keeping one.

However, towards the end of the week, he went out one afternoon and returned in high spirits, saying he had met a former friend who had had a windfall of luck, and had promised him a berth at thirty shillings a week.

"Thirty bob a week is not much," observed William, disparagingly, "but still it will keep me from the workhouse."

Helena thought it ought to do a good deal more than this, but she prudently refrained from saying so, and the next day he wished her good-bye, and went away, giving her an address to which he asked her to write as soon as she was settled.

She breathed a sigh of relief at his departure, for unconsciously she had chafed at his presence as a restraint, and revelled in the sense of feeling herself perfectly free again.

Then she set herself seriously to face the difficulties of her position, for her little store of money had dwindled very low indeed, and it would be still lower when the doctor's bill, for attendance on William Compton, had been paid.

Strange to say, as she sat there musing, the doctor himself came in.

"Where is your brother?" he asked, looking round the room, for it was in this relationship he had regarded nurse and patient. "I was passing, and so I thought I would look in."

"I am glad you did," she responded. "I was on the point of writing to ask you for your bill, and also to ask if you know of anyone who wants a nurse. I have not had a

hospital training, but I think I know the duties of the profession thoroughly."

"I am sure you do!" warmly. "I don't know of a situation likely to suit you just at present, but I will keep my eyes open, and let you know if I succeed in finding anything."

She thanked him, and he kept his promise so well that she received a note from him two days later, asking her to call at No.—, Park-lane, and inquire for Lady Seagrave, who wanted a nurse and companion combined.

Lady Seagrave! Why, that must be the widow of the last peer—the aunt of Vane Chisholm, and mother of Christabel!

Helena's heart began to beat very fast, and her first idea was to refuse to go, but then came an overwhelming desire to see these relatives of her husband, and especially to be brought face to face with the woman he loved. Perhaps, too, unknown to herself, there may have been a lurking wish once more to set eyes on Vane himself, for in these days of her sorrow and loneliness the remembrance of the hours they had passed together haunted her with a constantly increasing pain. She was experiencing the truth of the poet's words,—

"A sorrow's crown of sorrow,  
To remembering happier things."

## CHAPTER VIII.

LADY SEAGRAVE WAS a woman of forty-seven or eight, who had been a beauty in her youth, but now that both youth and beauty had departed felt the time hang heavily on her hands, and had adopted the rôle of invalid in order to fill it.

She was a fanciful person, too, and, luckily for Helena, took a liking to the latter and did not trouble her with many questions on the occasion of her first visit; but finding the salary she demanded was not large, engaged her immediately to come for a month on trial.

"Your duties will not be heavy," she said, in her low, languid tones, that were a trifle affected. "I keep a maid; but I want someone near me who thoroughly understands illness, and who can also read to me. My daughter is away from home so much that I see very little of her, and besides, she is so strong and healthy that she has no sympathy with other people's ailments. When shall you be able to come to me?"

"Whenever your ladyship likes."

"The sooner the better. This is Thursday, shall we say Monday?"

Helena bowed, and then took leave, rather doubtful whether she had done a wise thing, but never for one moment thinking of turning back in the path she had chosen. There was in her nature more than a grain of obstinacy, and once having made up her mind to a thing she seldom changed.

On the following Monday, therefore, she took up her abode at No.— Park-lane, and at once commenced her duties, which were by no means heavy, and only became tiresome when Lady Seagrave was more exacting than usual. Her daughter was away in the country, and did not return to town until Helena had been in her new situation nearly two months. By this time it was the middle of April, and the Honourable Christabel Seagrave had come back in time for the beginning of the London season.

Helena happened to be in the boudoir when she came in to see her mother, and then she was bound to confess that her rival was well worthy any man's admiration. A tall, golden-haired, blue-eyed woman, with a clear pink and white complexion, and the loveliest mouth it is possible to conceive; albeit that same mouth fell into curves that announced its owner's haughty and capricious temper. For about thirty seconds the two girls stood gazing at each other, then Helena quietly left the room, while Christabel turned to her mother and demanded who she was.

"What a heartless creature you are!" exclaimed Lady Seagrave, fretfully. "Here you have been away over three months, and instead of asking how I am, and saying you are glad to get home again, you begin the moment you enter the house making inquiries about my nurse!"

"Your nurse! Oh, well! I must say if I had been choosing a nurse I should have selected a less handsome one. How are you?" as she bent down to kiss the *so-disant* invalid. "You look very well!"

Of course Lady Seagrave, in common with most other hypochondriacs, deeply resented the imputation of "looking well," and instantly began a recital of all the sufferings she had passed through, and all the additional sufferings with which she was threatened, until Christabel interrupted her.

"Vane came down to Devonshire last week," she said; "he has quite recovered from his illness, and looks himself again; but all the same it has changed him a good deal!"

"How do you mean?" inquired her mother, with whom the young officer was a great favourite.

"He is a great deal quieter, and more thoughtful; he won't go to race meetings, and utterly refuses to play high at cards! Why, he would not even play for the stakes I did!"

"And a very good thing, too. I wish you would turn over a similar new leaf!"

Christabel shrugged her shoulders. She had a fortune of her own, and she was determined to spend it how she liked. As she was considerably more than twenty-one, she had entire control over it, and consequently resented any attempt at interference on her mother's part.

"I suppose it is about time Vane did reform," she went on presently, "and I expect he'll want to marry before very long in order to give Seagrave Hall a mistress, and the estates the prospect of an heir!"

Lady Seagrave flashed a keen glance at her.

"Shall you accept him if he offers himself to you again?"

"Yes," promptly. "Of course he is in a different position now to what he was eight years ago, when he and I made love to each other in the Seagrave woods. He really was very fond of me then."

"He was foolishly fond of you, or he never would have been so silly as to ask your father's consent to your marrying him. Of course, it was quite out of the question, as he himself was bound to acknowledge, for he had no income, and an infinite of debts."

"I never could make out how he paid those debts," observed Christabel, thoughtfully.

"I suppose he must have backed some outsider, and won on the Turf, or at cards, for he had no legitimate means of raising money. By the way, he lost some friend in the *Gloriana*, and he would not tell me who. He has put a black band round his arm; but for all that I don't fancy he grieves very much. It was a woman, I think!"

"One of his old loves, perhaps," said her mother. "When is he coming up to town?"

"Some day next week. I asked him to stay here, but he declined, saying he would go back to his old chambers. However, I daresay we shall see a good deal of him."

Christabel's presence made a very great deal of difference in the house in Park-lane; she was constantly going out and coming in. Callers arrived and dinner parties were given, at which Lady Seagrave was forced to take the head of the table, although she would infinitely have preferred the quiet of her boudoir—but Christabel was an exacting young lady, and generally contrived to persuade her mother to do what she liked.

Helena had more leisure; but she did not care for the change, for she had a sort of idea that Miss Seagrave did not like her, and was angry with her mother for having engaged a companion. This was partly true; Christabel, quite conscious of her own beauty, did not relish the idea of being in the same house with a woman whom she was bound to confess

was much handsomer than herself, and would certainly have preferred Helena should leave before she had been seen by any of her friends. She had hinted to Lady Seagrave the advisability of not adding to the expenses of the household by another member; but her hints were in vain, for the elder lady was really fond of Helena, and utterly declined parting with her.

Our heroine's state of mind at this time was not enviable. She had seen from one of the society papers that Vane was in London, and knew that she might at any moment be brought face to face with him; the consequence of this knowledge resulted in a nervous excitement which she was utterly powerless to control. Suppose she met him in the presence of Christabel, and lost her self-possession!

After all, her fears were groundless, for when she did meet him she was alone in Lady Seagrave's boudoir, busily employed in mending some costly old lace belonging to Christabel. The lace dropped from her nerveless fingers, and she started to her feet with a low, half-stifled exclamation as he entered, while he gazed at her for a moment in mute surprise; then he took a hasty step forward, and held out both his hands.

"Is it really you?" he exclaimed. "What piece of good fortune brings you here?"

She did not reply immediately, for, truth to tell, no words would come in answer to his greeting. The sweet tell-tale colour rushed into her cheeks, and she made a half-shrinking backward movement, whose meaning he misinterpreted.

"I beg your pardon. I fear my inquiry was rude," he said, hastily. "Of course, I have no right to ask you questions, except the right bestowed on me by the gratitude I feel for your kindness during my illness."

"You are quite well now?" she said, ignoring his question and apology alike, and looking half anxiously into his face—a brown, sun-burnt face, bearing upon it the unmistakable imprint of health.

"Quite well—thanks to your good nursing. By-the-way, why did you not wish me goodbye, before leaving as you did?"

"Because I had to go away so hurriedly. Affairs in England called me back," in some confusion, "and I had no time for farewells. Have you seen Lady Seagrave yet?"

"No. I thought I should find her here."

"She is out driving with her daughter, but," glancing at the clock, "I don't think she will be away much longer."

"I am not anxious for her return," declared the officer, boldly, and without removing his eyes from his companion's face. "I cannot tell you how glad I am to meet you again, Nurse Monica!"

"You are very good," she faltered, with downcast eyes.

He laughed as if amused.

"I am afraid if you accused me of being very selfish it would be nearer the mark. However, we will not dispute the point. Are you—may I be permitted to ask—living in London?"

"I am living here."

"Here!"

"Yes, as nurse, or, to speak more correctly, companion to your aunt."

"Indeed!" he said, looking surprised.

Without having any reason for his opinion, it struck him as incongruous that this queenly-looking girl should occupy a subordinate position in his aunt's household—should be accepting wages like any other servant, for, from the inquiries he had made, he was aware that her services in Egypt had been entirely voluntary.

There was another awkward silence between them; he broke it by saying, in a slightly constrained manner,—

"What am I to call you? I have never been able to find out your name, for no one seemed to know it in the regiment, and I suppose it won't do for me to address you as 'Nurse Monica' now?"

"My name is Monica Burn," she answered, shortly, while a deep red flushed her face, and her fingers twisted in and out of each other in the old way he remembered so well. "A strange name, is it not?"

"It is far from a common one, if that is what you mean."

"That being so, there is the less danger of your forgetting it."

"There never could be the least danger of my forgetting it," he returned gravely, wondering at the sudden awkwardness that seemed to have fallen upon her, and at the colour that changed so rapidly in her cheeks.

At this moment, while they both stood opposite the other, each more or less embarrassed, the door was pushed open and Christabel Seagrave stood on the threshold.

She looked from her cousin to Helena, noted the blush that deepened on the latter's face, and at once came to a mental conclusion on the situation. She gave no hint, however, of what this conclusion was, but came forward and held out her hand to Vane.

"I am so glad to see you. How long have you been here?"

"Not long. I have only just come," answered Vane, who really thought he spoke the truth, for time had gone so swiftly that he had been unaware of his flight.

Christabel's lip curled slightly, for she had been informed downstairs that Lord Seagrave was in the boudoir, and that he had been waiting there for nearly half an hour. She turned round sharply to speak to Helena, but the girl had taken advantage of the momentary diversion effected by Miss Seagrave's entrance to quietly leave the room; and Christabel was far too accomplished a woman of the world to accuse her cousin of the untruth he had unwittingly told. She seated herself in a low chair close by the window, and removed her hat, glancing at the same moment into the opposite mirror to see that the tangled disorder of her fair hair was picturesque and becoming.

"You have been in town two or three days, haven't you?" she said.

"Yes."

"How is it you did not come to see us before?"

His eyes fell a little uneasily, like those of a man who felt that the ground beneath his feet was not quite so solid as it might have been.

"Oh, I don't know. I have had such a lot to do, business matters that couldn't be put off."

"You have altered, Vane! There was a time when any business matters would have been put off for the sake of an interview with me."

"Yes, my dear Christabel—of course; but you see I was not quite sure of an interview with you. You go out so much, and have such claims laid upon you by society that there is always the risk of not finding you at home."

"A note would have made the fact an assured one."

"Would it? You are very kind—much kinder than I deserve, I am afraid. By the way, where is my aunt?"

"In her dressing-room. Are you in a great hurry to see her?"

"I am, rather." He drew out his watch.

"The fact is I have an appointment at my club in twenty minutes' time, so you see I have not much leisure. Do you think I might venture to knock at your mother's door and tell her so?"

"Certainly!"

He went out of the room, and, as he left, a strange change came over Christabel's face—a change that made it look fully ten years older. The features hardened, the lips set themselves together in a straight line, and a gleam like unsheathed steel came into her eyes.

"Am I going to lose him after all?" she muttered, pressing her hands tightly across her chest. "Has he ceased to care for me, or

has this nurse's face taken his fancy? Men are fickle, I know, but I thought he loved me too well ever to change."

She got up and walked backwards and forwards across the room, the hardness in her eyes deepening every moment.

A dangerous woman to offend!—a woman who knew her own beauty, and, exulting in the consciousness of the power it gave her, would resent with a deadly bitterness any attempt at rivalry. A woman, moreover, of strong will and passions, combining a man's capacity with a woman's tenacity of purpose, and caring little for the price she paid, so long as she achieved the object upon which she had set her heart!

## CHAPTER IX.

LORD SEAGRAVE was very assiduous in his attentions to his aunt, and his visits to the pretty little house in Park-lane were very numerous. He usually came in the morning, when he was pretty sure of finding her at home; and on these occasions Helena sat in a corner of the room, sewing or knitting, and occasionally taking part in the conversation—for Lady Seagrave usually made a point of requesting her not to leave, as her presence was not felt in the least degree as a restraint. Perhaps this was, in a sense, the happiest part of our heroine's life. Once more she felt that sense of youth which had deserted after her marriage, accompanied by a feeling of liberty to which she had long been a stranger. Her shyness overcome, she talked with the unconstraint natural to her; and Lady Seagrave, as well as her nephew, felt the charm of her freshness and originality.

Christabel was not often present in the boudoir, for her manifold society engagements really left her little time; besides which, she hardly knew how to control her anger at what she called her mother's foolishness in permitting the nurse so much of an equality.

Sometimes Helena went out shopping with the two ladies, and it happened on one of these occasions that as she was stepping from the Victoria, she caught sight of William Compton in the distance, and paused in indecision as to whether she should wait and speak, or go into the shop and thus avoid him.

A quick gesture of his hand made her adopt the former alternative, after a hasty whisper to Lady Seagrave that she had met a friend and wished to speak to him.

When her two companions had disappeared inside the shop, she greeted her former patient with some slight coolness, which might have been attributed to the fact that Mr. Compton's eyes were a little too bright, and his cheeks too flushed for perfect sobriety.

"Dear me, what a swell we are!" he remarked, sneeringly, as he glanced at the carriage, with its pair of well-groomed horses. "We are so grand that we don't care to be seen associating with such a seedy person as I am."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Helena, drawing nearer the shop windows, so as to be out of earshot of the coachman. "How is it that you are walking about at this time of the day—have you taken a holiday from the office?"

"A holiday for good!" he answered, grimly. "The fact is, I couldn't stand being boxed up there any longer, so I took French leave last Monday morning, and haven't been near the cursed place since!"

"But what are you going to do?" in dismay.

He shrugged his shoulders, and lighted a cigarette with fingers that shook very considerably.

"Goodness knows—I'm sure I don't. I suppose I must look out for another crib, and in the meantime fall back on your generosity for a loan."

"Indeed you must do nothing of the sort! I am poor myself, and it is out of my power to help you to any great extent."



"Still, I suppose you won't refuse me a sovereign? You might give it me now."

"I cannot do that, for the simple reason that I have not my purse with me."

"That's a pity. Well, I'll come to Park-lane—I know the number—and you can give it me this evening."

Helena would have indignantly refused to have blackmail thus levied upon her had she not seen that the man was really the worse for liquor, and in a mood when it would have been dangerous to cross his wishes for fear of a scene—which she naturally wished to avoid.

"You must not come to Park-lane," she said, hastily; "but I will send you the sovereign in a letter, which will be the same thing."

"No, it won't!" he answered, with dogged sullenness. "But if you're too proud to have me come to the house, I'll meet you outside any time you like to appoint. The fact is, I want the cash this evening; and have it I must, or I'll make it jolly disagreeable for some of you!"

He looked at her with sullen determination, and at this precise juncture Christabel Seagrave came to the door of the shop, accompanied by Vane, whom she had met inside. They both fixed their eyes on Helena and her companion, and the former felt a guilty flush rise to her face under their scrutiny. At all hazards, she must get rid of Compton now!

"I will meet you at the corner of Mount-street, at nine o'clock this evening," she said, in a quick whisper; "and now, for Heaven's sake, go away!"

He obeyed, sulkily enough, it is true, and after a glance at Miss Seagrave and her cousin, both of whom he already knew by sight.

The incident had a very disagreeable effect on Helena, who fancied—and not altogether without reason—that it had a suspicious appearance in the eyes of Christabel.

Lord Seagrave accompanied them home, and was very silent during the drive. He was a man pretty well versed in the ways of the world, and capable of giving a very shrewd guess as to the characters of the people with whom he was brought into contact, and one glance had been quite sufficient to assure him that Mr. Compton was one of those gentlemen who may be classed under the generic term of "shady."

"Who was he? What had he to do with Helena?" he asked himself. "He was not her brother, for there was not the faintest trace of family resemblance between them, and certainly it was hard to believe she would select such a person as her friend."

Lord Seagrave was puzzled, and ever and anon stole a side glance at Helena, which had the effect of greatly embarrassing her.

She was glad when they reached home; and on the plea of not feeling well, she got Lady Seagrave to excuse her, and went to her own room, where she remained all the afternoon, thinking over the falseness of the position in which she was placed, and doubtful whether, after all, her conduct had been justifiable.

In the evening, as the time of her appointment drew near, she grew nervous, and Christabel, who happened to be at home, noticed the fact, and wondered what had caused it.

Lady Seagrave dined at half-past seven; consequently, at nine o'clock she might always be trusted to be asleep, and Helena was therefore "off duty."

This evening was no exception to the rule, so as the clocks were striking, our heroine stole quietly downstairs, trusting to her shrouding black cloak and thick veil to help her in escaping notice.

As it happened, she was destined to disappointment, for no less a person than Miss Seagrave herself met her in the hall, and she was forced to come to a standstill.

"Is it you, Miss Burn?" in an accent of astonishment. "Are you going out?"

"Only for a few minutes," faltered Helena. "I have a headache, and I thought a breath of fresh air would do me good."

Christabel looked incredulous.

"It is rather late for you to be out alone."

"I don't mind that, and I shall not be away long," Helena said, a little resentful at the manner in which the remark was made. And as she spoke she slipped past Miss Seagrave into the hall, and out through the front door.

After she had gone Christabel stood for a moment in a doubtful attitude, then went upstairs to her dressing-room, where a middle-aged woman, of somewhat unprepossessing aspect, sat sewing. This was her maid, who had been with her for over ten years, and who—to do her justice—was thoroughly devoted to her mistress's interests.

"Garvel," said Miss Seagrave, "I want you to follow Miss Burn, who has just gone out and keep her in view. She is too young, and too pretty to roam the streets at this time of night alone!"

Garvel shot a furtive glance at the speaker as she put away her work, and rose. She was quite aware that her mistress had some other motive besides solicitude for Helen's welfare; but what that motive was it did not concern her to inquire.

"I suppose you don't want Miss Burn to see me following her?" she observed, interrogatively.

"Certainly not!"

It did not take Garvel two minutes to slip on cloak and bonnet, and when she had gone, Christabel returned to the drawing-room where a few minutes later, Lord Seagrave was announced. As he greeted her he glanced round the room, and seemed a little embarrassed to find they were alone.

"Mother is asleep," she observed, as if in answer to his unspoken question, "and we are expecting no visitors to-night, so you will be dull if you intend honouring us with your company for long!"

"Dull in your presence!" he exclaimed, gallantly.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I do not think you find my presence so attractive as your words would imply, otherwise you would seek it oftener!"

He pulled his moustache in some embarrassment, and murmured an excuse about the numerous claims of society.

"Society!" she echoed, scornfully. "You are the very last man in the world to become its slave, and even if it were so, you would yet find time to see me oftener, supposing you wished to do so." She paused a moment, furling and unfurling her fan as she stood opposite him, with the soft light of the rose-shaded lamps, lending an added charm to her beauty, and her eyes fixed on the floor.

Suddenly she raised them and looked fully into his, while she came a few steps nearer.

"Vane!" she exclaimed, impulsively, "I must come to a full understanding with you, for it is quite impossible for us to go on in this way any longer. Before you went to India you told me you loved me—asked me to be your wife—swore that no other woman would take my place, and that life without me would be misery! Do you remember?"

"I remember," he said, gravely, while a deep red stained the bronzed pallor of his face; "and I also remember that you refused me!"

"What was I to do? I had no alternative. You were much too poor to keep a wife, and my father absolutely forbade our marriage; besides, you were deeply in debt."

"I know that. I know quite well that it was madness to hope you would defy your father, poverty, and the world, for my sake; and yet, if you had done so, a great deal of misery would have been spared!"

"You loved me then, Vane!"

"I did—I loved you with the first passion of youth, and to me you were even more a goddess than a woman; but you refused my love, and so—" he paused. It is hard for a man to tell a woman a truth that he knows will wound her, and Vane Chisholm was no braver in this respect than the rest of his sex.

"Well!" she exclaimed, bending forward a little to hear his reply. He did not speak, but kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and after a few moments' pause, she added, in a low, strained tone, "Do you mean the love is dead, Vane?"

"Yes," he said, looking up, and speaking firmly. "It is quite—quite dead, and the memory of it is like some far away pain, whose sting has vanished. It is hard to speak thus to you, Christabel; but it is better that you should know the truth!"

"Yes," she murmured, "it is much better; but let me ask you one question, Vane. Has a new love taken the place of the old one?" She stopped again, and looked at him eagerly, then before he could speak, continued, "You need not tell me, I can see the answer on your face! Who is the woman?"

"Do you think you have any right to put such a question, Christabel?"

"Yes!" passionately, "I have every right. Am I not your cousin—your nearest relative, and do I not take more interest in your welfare than any one else?"

Vane looked undecided. He could not quite understand her, for he was not a conceited man, and the true solution of her conduct if it occurred to him, gave him no clue to her motive for questioning him thus.

"I'll be candid with you, Christabel," he said, at last, "for, as you say, you are—with the exception of your mother—the only kith and kin I have in the world, and I believe you would be really glad to see my happiness secured. Well then, I am in love, and with an inmate of this house—Monica Burn!"

Christabel drew a quick, deep breath, and sat down on a low ottoman near, but in such a position that her face was in shadow. She was a woman of the world, skilled in the art of concealing her feelings, and even now while a tumult of passionate wrath rioted through her veins, there was no sign in her features beyond an added flush to tell of more than ordinary emotion.

"Have you told Miss Burn this?" she asked presently, in her low even tones.

"No; I have been afraid to do so, for fear of her refusing me. I thought I would wait until she knew me better."

"You need not have been afraid," Christabel interrupted, scornfully. "A girl in her position is not likely to remain insensible to the charms of wealth, and a title."

"That might apply to some girls, but I am sure it would have no weight with her," he declared, with grave conviction. "I am sure she is one of the purest and most single-hearted girls in the whole universe—a girl for whose sake the world would be well lost!"

## CHAPTER X.

HELENA found William Compton awaiting her at the appointed place, but her interview was far from a satisfactory one; and almost as soon as she gave him the sovereign she regretted having yielded to his threat, for he evidently regarded it as a sign of fear on her part, and made no secret of his exultation.

"You're wise," he said, with half tipsy gravity. "You've got a jolly comfortable berth, and you're wise to stick to it; but I should like you to remember that if you don't keep good friends with me you'll stand a very good chance of being asked to clear out, for it isn't likely Lady Seagrave would care to have a person in her house who goes under a false name, and who makes out she is single, while all the time she is married."

"You have no business to say such things," exclaimed Helena, indignantly. "What Lady Seagrave likes or dislikes is nothing to do with you."

"Oh, isn't it? Perhaps I know more about Lady Seagrave and Lord Seagrave than you do—perhaps I have a friend in the house who keeps me well posted up in all that goes on at

No.—, Park Lane, and who keeps a particularly sharp eye on you, my lady!"

"What do you mean?"

"Never mind what I mean. I know what I know, and that is, that while I'm out of a berth I shall expect you to give me half your salary, and if you cut up rough I shall just send a letter to Lady Seagrave, and then there will be a nice fuss. D—n it all!" he exclaimed, working himself up into a fury, "oughtn't you to have married me years ago, and then shouldn't we both be rich enough to enjoy ourselves as we liked, instead of having to earn every paltry shilling before we have a chance of spending it?"

To argue with him while he was in this mood would have been the height of foolishness, so Helena did not attempt it; but as soon as she could get away she left him, and hurried back home, quite unconscious of the fact that she was being watched by the lynx eyes of Mrs. Garvel—for Miss Seagrave's maid was a widow, and quipped it over the rest of the servants by virtue of the dignity of being a matron.

Our heroine's meditations were far from pleasant as she reflected over her interview, for it seemed quite clear that William Compton would use to the uttermost the power he held, and he could certainly make her position extremely uncomfortable, to say the least. Indeed, if he really told Lady Seagrave that she was masquerading under an assumed name, her dismissal would follow as a matter of course, for in this kind of thing her ladyship was extremely particular, and would not have hesitated in sacrificing her personal liking for her young companion. Of course Helena had the alternative of leaving of her own free will, but from this course she shrank with untold repugnance, for did it not mean an eternal farewell to Vane, and was not the time spent in his society like moments stolen from Paradise?

Over and over again she had told herself how worse than foolish it was to yield to the delight of the spell he had cast upon her, for the time must surely come when they would be separated, and when he would wed the woman whose name had been on his lips when he was delicious—Christabel. But for all that, she would have given five years of her life rather than go, for the future seemed so vague, and far away in comparison with the near delight of the present.

And so she stayed on, feeling all the time, like a woman standing beside a precipice, under whose feet the ground may at any moment give way. She saw Vane frequently, for he paid daily visits to Park Lane, and as he generally selected the morning for his calls it followed that he and Helena saw a great deal of each other. In point of fact, if it had not been for William Compton, and his constant drain on her purse, she would have been, comparatively speaking, happy; but the latter grew more and more insatiate in his demands until at last she determined to flatly refuse to give him another farthing.

This occurred one evening towards the end of May, when she had met him in Hyde Park, and, as may be imagined, he did not receive her ultimatum at all kindly.

"I mean what I say," she declared, firmly. "You are as well able to get your living as I am, and there is no earthly reason why I should support you in idleness."

"You know what the consequences will be if you don't give me what I want," he muttered, threateningly.

"I know that you are a coward—cruel, callous, and unmanly!" with indignation. "And I also know that henceforward I shall refuse to submit to your abominable demands. Of course, you can tell your tale to Lady Seagrave if you like, but you will gain nothing by it, even if you succeed in getting me turned out of the house."

"Do you call that nothing?" he sneered. "I cannot agree with you, for it seems to me a great deal. You are quite mistaken if you suppose you are going to get rid of me so

easily, my lady. I am not the sort of man you can shake off whenever you please, and I will let you know it. Recollect, it is not only Lady Seagrave I can tell of your having given yourself out for dead, and assumed a false name; but other people as well, to whom you may apply for a situation in the future."

Helena shivered involuntarily, less at the words than the tone in which they were uttered.

She knew quite well that she was dealing with a man utterly dead to all feelings of honour or shame—a man who would use the power he held without compunction—who would even glory in wringing from her the last farthing she possessed. But her face betrayed no sign of fear as she met his gaze, with imperial scorn in her eyes.

"Do your worst!" she exclaimed. "And whatever it may be I defy you."

She would have turned away as she spoke, but he caught her arm, and detained her.

"Mind what you are doing!" he said. "I am not a man to threaten things, and not perform them."

"I decline to talk to you any longer. Let me go. Do you hear? Let me go!"

Unconsciously she raised her voice, striving as she spoke to free herself from his hold.

They were in a lonely part of the Park, and it was growing dusk. There were few pedestrians about, and the knowledge of this fact may have emboldened Compton, for he did not release her, and Helena, growing thoroughly frightened, exclaimed,—

"I will call for help if you do not let me go!"

Hardly were the words out of her mouth before they were answered, and in the person of Vane, Lord Seagrave.

"Loose that lady immediately!" he said, sternly, stepping up to the group, and recognising Helena with a faint thrill of disagreeable surprise at beholding her in so compromising a situation.

"What business is it of yours?" demanded Compton, insolently. "You mind your own concerns, and don't interfere with other people's!"

"It is so far my concern that if you don't take your hand off the lady this moment I shall be under the necessity of knocking you down!" was the calm rejoinder.

Compton took no notice of the warning, and in another moment—almost in less time than it takes to write—he reeled backwards, half stunned by the effects of a blow administered by the soldier, who drew Helena to his side, and pulled her arm through his.

"There is my card," he said, flinging it on the ground at Compton's feet. "If you like to seek redress in the police-courts you are at liberty to do so."

Then he drew Helena rapidly from the spot, and did not pause until they were well out of earshot.

(To be concluded in our next.)

## CONVICTS ON THE WAY TO SIBERIA.

THE sight of a body of convicts, hopelessly travelling over the plains on the way to Siberia, arouses the deepest sympathy, and is seldom forgotten. Among them, very likely, are many innocent persons, men and women, doomed to banishment for life because of some political reasons, or because they have aroused the dislike of dignitaries with influence enough to have them for ever removed from their path.

You see a marshy plain, where the icy winds blow freely, driving before it the snow that begins to cover the frozen soil. Morasses, with small shrubs or crumpled trees, bent down by wind and snow, spread as far as the eye can reach. The next village is twenty miles distant. Low mountains, covered with thick pine forests, mingling with the grey

snow-cloud, rise in the dust on the horizon. A track, marked all along by poles to distinguish it from the surrounding plain, ploughed and rugged by the passage of thousands of cars, covered with ruts that break down the hardest wheels, runs through the naked plain.

The party slowly moves along this road. In front, a row of soldiers opens the march. Behind them heavily advance the hard-labour convicts, with half-shaved heads, wearing grey clothes, with a yellow diamond on the back, and open shoes worn out by the long journey, and exhibiting the tatters in which the wounded feet are wrapped. Each convict wears a chain riveted to his ankles, its rings being twisted into rags—if the convict has collected enough of alms during his journey to pay the blacksmith for riveting it looser on his feet. The chain goes up each leg and is suspended to a girdle. Another chain closely ties both hands, and a third chain binds together six or eight convicts. Every false movement of any of the pack is felt by all his chain-companions; the feeble is dragged forward by the stronger, and he must not stop.

Behind the hard-labour convicts march those who are condemned to settle in Siberia, wearing the same grey cloth and the same kind of shoes. Soldiers accompany the party on both sides, meditating perhaps the order given at the departure: "If one of them runs away, shoot him down." If he is killed, five roubles reward for you, and a dog's death to the dog! In the rear you discover a few cars that are drawn by small, attenuated cattle peasants' horses. They are loaded with the bags of sick convicts, with the sick or dying, who are fastened with ropes on the top of the load.

Behind the cars hasten the wives of the convicts; a few have found a free corner on a loaded car, and crouch there when unable to move further; while the great number march behind the cars, leading their children by the hands, or bearing them on their arms. Dressed in rags, freezing under the gusts of the cold wind, cutting their almost naked feet on the frozen ruts, how many of them despairingly exclaim, "These tortures, how long will they last?" In the rear comes a second detachment of soldiers, who drive with the butt-ends of their rifles those women who stop exhausted in the freezing mud of the road. The procession is closed by the car of the commander of the party.

As the car enters some great village, it begins to sing the "Miloserdnaya"—the "charity song." They call it a song, but it is hardly that. It is a succession of woes escaping from hundreds of breasts at once, a recital in very plain words expressing with a childish simplicity the sad fate of the convict—a horrible lamentation by means of which the Russian exile appeals to the mercy of other miserable like himself. Centuries of suffering, of pains and misery, of persecutions that crush down the most vital of the people, are heard in these recitals and shrieks. These tones of deep sorrow recall the tortures of the last century, the stifled cries and sticks and whips in our own time, the darkness of the cellars, the wilderness of the woods, the tears of the starving wife. The peasants of the villages on the Siberian highway understand these tones; they know their true meaning from their own experience, and the appeal of the "sufferer," as the Russian peasants call all prisoners, is answered by the poor. The most destitute widow, signing herself with the cross, brings her coppers or her piece of bread, and deeply bows before the "chained" sufferer, grateful to him for not disdaining her small offering.

A MAN who hath no virtue in himself ever envieth virtue in others; for men's minds will either feed upon their own good, or upon others' evil; and who wanteth the one will prey upon the other.



## THE GOLDEN HOPE.

—O—

## CHAPTER XXVII.—(continued.)

Cecile's visitor was standing by a window, but he turned abruptly as he heard her light foot-fall on the carpet, and faced her with an expression of countenance before which she might well have shrank.

Seen by the broad daylight, one could not but wonder how Cecile could ever have made him the hero of her girlish dreams. Tall beyond the usual stature of tall men, with broad shoulders and a Herculean frame, he presented a most perfect contrast to Andrew Forsythe. His face lacked the refinement that distinguished Mr. Forsythe's, but had a bolder expression, and his falcon eyes had in them a look that told of untamed passions that could easily escape the leash of self-control.

"What is this I read in the court papers?" he asked, quickly and suddenly, without heeding Cecile's polite salutation or replying to it. "Is it mere idle gossip, or are you really engaged to marry Mr. Andrew Forsythe?"

"How vehement you are, Darcy!" exclaimed Cecile, evasively. "I cannot marry two men at once, can I? You ought to have faith enough in me to disbelieve anything to my prejudice. Sit down, and I will explain matters to your satisfaction."

She indicated a chair, and Mr. Anchester took possession of it somewhat reluctantly, and awaited the promised explanation.

"Well?" he said, as she remained silent, uncertain what to say. "Is the report true or not?"

"Before we talk of my affairs, tell me of your visit home," said Cecile, regaining her full self-possession. "Did your father receive you kindly, and did the Marchioness, his wife, suspect your relationship to him? Will he do anything for you?"

"To your first question I answer yes; to the second no! To the third, I may say that the Marquis is not at all inclined to be generous," and Mr. Anchester spoke bitterly. "My father is inclined to lavish everything upon his heir. He is ready to buy me a commission or set me up in a profession, but I do not like work, and I therefore have declined his offers. It only remains for me to make a brilliant marriage. Unless I marry you, such a course would be impossible to me. Without a lawful name, without money or prospects, with only my wits to procure me a subsistence, I can never obtain entrance into society, or induce an heiress to look favourably upon me. You are my ark of refuge, and you need not think I shall calmly relinquish you. This report of your betrothal to Mr. Forsythe must be immediately contradicted, and our union must take place immediately."

He spoke as if he felt himself master, and Cecile felt a sense of powerlessness creep over her. Between two such opposing fires—between Mr. Forsythe and Mr. Anchester—what could she do? She felt as if she had been driven to the wall, and all desperate expedients came into her mind.

"It is true, then, that you have engaged yourself to Mr. Forsythe in my absence?" exclaimed Mr. Anchester, watching her face keenly.

Cecile faltered an affirmative.

"I have arrived in time to frustrate your designs. You intended to strengthen your position with Lady Redwoode by marrying her late husband's nephew, but that course is not open to you. Mr. Forsythe must be set aside in my favour. I have come to Redwoode to establish my position as your favoured suitor, and I desire to be introduced at once to Lady Redwoode as your betrothed husband, who has followed you from India, in the ardour of his passion, and who demands an immediate marriage."

"Mamma is ill; she cannot see visitors to-day!" stammered the girl.

"Permit me to send a message to her," said Mr. Anchester, coolly, rising and touching the bell-rope. "When she learns who I am and my relation towards you, she will no doubt exert herself to see me!"

Cecile made no response. She remained cold and silent until the footman appeared to answer the bell, and then she said quietly, and in a tone of perfect self-possession:

"Tell Mr. Forsythe that his presence is desired in the drawing-room."

The servant bowed and departed on his errand. Mr. Anchester bit his lip in chagrin at Cecile's unexpected movement, and said:

"Well, have your own way, my self-willed beauty. In a few days more you will have to conform to my will in all things, and dismiss for ever your waywardness. It is perhaps as well that I should meet Mr. Forsythe first, but I shall demand an interview with Lady Redwoode before I leave, if I leave at all."

At this juncture Mr. Forsythe made his appearance. He came in easily, but started slightly at beholding his rival, and looked at him with considerable interest, as if he had been of some unknown race.

Cecile performed the necessary introduction.

"Ah, Mr. Anchester!" said Mr. Forsythe, extending the tips of two fingers to the Herculean East Indian. "This is not altogether an unexpected pleasure. I fancied we should see you at Redwoode soon. I feel already well acquainted with you, from having heard Cecile speak of you, as well as from the remembrance of our former meeting!"

"You are mistaken, Mr. Forsythe," said Mr. Anchester. "We have never met before!"

"Pardon me, I am never mistaken," returned Mr. Forsythe, in the same tone he had chosen to employ in his intercourse with his other rival. "I had the pleasure of witnessing your last very romantic interview with Miss Avon in the park."

Mr. Anchester turned a look of mingled fury and menace upon Cecile, but she met it calmly, Mr. Forsythe's manner having inspired her with hope and courage. She had great confidence in Mr. Forsythe's *finesse* and diplomacy, and entertained a growing belief that he would in some way conquer his formidable rival.

"I know, consequently," continued Mr. Forsythe, pleasantly, "the terms of your friendship with Miss Avon. I know the hold you have upon her, the secret by means of which you would force her into a marriage with you, and those particulars about your birth and parentage, which you were frank enough to impart to her. You left Cecile much distressed by your manner and words, and I seized the opportunity of coming forward and offering her my protection."

"You did?" said Mr. Anchester, in some bewilderment. "And she accepted you?"

"Could she have done otherwise? If you held her soul in the subjection of fear, I held it in still stronger hands of terror. I know the secret which you hold. I know much, and suspect still more. I have more advantages on my side. My parentage and birth were noble. My position in society is assured. Can you wonder, then, that Cecile should prefer me?"

"Let her choose between us!" exclaimed Mr. Anchester, erecting his figure, and looking menacingly at Cecile.

"Her choice is already made," said Mr. Forsythe. "I am more eligible than you, and more to be dreaded. Lady Redwoode has given us her consent and approval, and I assure you she would never allow Cecile to marry you. You would say that you can compel Cecile to marry you. Suppose I grant that. You can never compel Lady Redwoode to receive you as her son-in-law! And, should you enforce the marriage, I would exert all my influence with the Baroness to induce her ladyship to claim Hellice as her daughter in-

stead of Cecile. Your bride would then be poor, penniless, and an encumbrance to you."

Mr. Forsythe spoke earnestly now, and Mr. Anchester knew he meant what he said. The latter began to feel himself no match for his rival, and reflected as to his best course. He saw that a marriage with Cecile might be his ruin, should Mr. Forsythe succeed in installing Hellice in Cecile's place.

"I will be frank with you, Mr. Forsythe," he said, after much deliberation. "I am not so much in love with Cecile that it would grieve me to yield her to another. I fancied her as one fancies a pretty picture, but my ardour was all assumed to gain her love. I am willing to bargain with you. I will give up Cecile to you if you will give me instead social recognition, a good income, and an opportunity to marry an heiress!"

"But how can I procure you these advantages?"

"Easily enough. You purpose marrying Cecile from the same motives that influenced me—ambition and love of wealth. You may marry her if you wish, but the hold I have upon Cecile will also be a hold upon you. You do not want a poor wife. The same argument you applied to me will apply to you."

"Very true," assented Mr. Forsythe. "If I marry her it will be in your power to blight my ambition, if you choose. Tell me how I can procure you the advantages you require, and I will give you my decision."

You must make me an honoured guest of Redwoode, vouch for my antecedents, introduce me to society, grant me a liberal income, and give me a chance to make a brilliant marriage. You must also give me to-day the first instalment of my income. On these conditions I will agree to be present as a friend at your wedding breakfast."

Mr. Forsythe devoted a few minutes to thought and to the study of Mr. Anchester's countenance. The terms offered seemed to him eminently favourable to himself. The demands of this East Indian adventurer could be readily gratified, without awakening the faintest suspicion of a mystery in the breast of Lady Redwoode, or her sharp-eyed adviser, Mr. Kenneth.

"I accept your terms, Mr. Anchester," he said, quietly. "You shall have a home at Redwoode, the advantages of society, and a good income. You shall have every opportunity I can give you of winning a rich wife, and I will answer to your satisfaction all inquiries as to your antecedents."

"It is a bargain, then!" said Mr. Anchester, extending his hand, with a satisfied smile. "You can marry Cecile as soon as you choose."

The two men shook hands amicably, and Cecile drew a long breath of relief.

"I have only one stipulation to make," said Mr. Forsythe. "But first—Cecile, does Lady Redwoode know the name of your visitor?"

Cecile replied in the negative.

"Very good," commented her betrothed. "Now, Mr. Anchester, I have a balance in my bank, and I will give you a cheque upon it. To-morrow, after receiving the funds, you will telegraph to me that you are coming to visit me. I will show the telegram to Lady Redwoode, and tell her that you are one of my town friends, and a distant relative of the Marquis of Anchester. I will send a carriage to Wharton to meet you. When you arrive, you need say nothing of having seen Cecile before, or of ever having been in India."

"All this meets my approval," declared the adventurer. "Give me the cheque, my dear Mr. Forsythe, and I'll be off at once. I'll telegraph promptly to-morrow morning, and before the evening you shall install me as a permanent guest at Redwoode."

Well pleased, Mr. Forsythe withdrew to fill out the promised cheque, and Mr. Anchester was left alone with Cecile. He looked at the fair blonde with her unnaturally brilliant complexion, and the unnatural red glowing on her cheeks, and thought in his own heart that he had after all made a good exchange.

Cecile was a little too artificial to suit him. If she had been Hellice now—Hellice with her tropical loveliness and shy artlessness—he would never have given her up, had a hundred Forsythes stood in his path. Better have money and social recognition than Cecile's hand, and a constant dread of exposure and expulsion.

"You seem to have no regrets for the old love, Cecile," he said, going up to her. "Do you love this Mr. Forsythe?"

"I love no one but myself," was the truthful response, uttered with bitterness. "I prefer him to you, if that be what you mean, and mamma is well satisfied with my choice. You are coming here as a stranger to me, and as the friend of Andrew Forsythe," the girl added, "and it will be your own fault, Darcy, if you do not marry into one of these old county families."

Mr. Anchester expressed his resolve to do so, and had scarcely finished his sentence when Mr. Forsythe returned, cheque in hand. The adventurer looked at it, surprised at the amount it specified, declared his thanks, and prepared to take his departure.

"You can go out through the conservatory, so that the footman will not see you again," said Mr. Forsythe. "It will be as well that you should not fix your features in his mind, since you are to return here to-morrow as a stranger from town."

He ushered the visitor through the conservatory into the garden, and watched him as he struck into the lawn and made for the road. He then returned to Cecile to congratulate her upon his compact with their enemy, and to indulge in self-gratulations, while Mr. Anchester gained the road and walked on muttering,—

"I said rightly enough I would not have given Cecile up if she had been Hellice. I will marry an heiress—stay! why should I not outwit Mr. Forsythe and Cecile by marrying Hellice herself? By Jove, that is a brilliant idea! I'll act upon it!" he chuckled to himself, his eyes gleamed and glittered, and his breath came quickly. "I've hit the fountain-head of the stream of riches! I'll marry Hellice! I'll come back to-morrow, as agreed upon, and make Redwoode my home, while I woo this pretty little outcast. I must find out where she is, as soon as possible, and some fine morning I'll strike Cecile and Mr. Forsythe dumb with consternation by presenting to them my bride! Ha! ha!"

Full of this new idea he hurried on.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

If your resolutions be like mine,  
We will yet give our sorrows a brave end.  
Justice is for us, so may fortune be;  
I'm a bright proof of her inconstancy.  
But if no god will lend us any aid,  
Let us be gods and fortunes to ourselves.

—Crown's Darius.

SIR RICHARD HAUGHTON, with his uncle, drove back to the inn at North Eldon after the unsuccessful attempt of the former to bring about an interview with Hellice.

Mr. Kenneth had been deaf to all his prayers and expostulations, and Miss Kenneth had met all his arguments with assurances of the baseness of his betrothed, and had demonstrated to her own satisfaction the unsuitableness of any tender relations between him and Hellice.

The brother and sister united had been like a solid wall of ice, chilling and repulsing him, and he had finally withdrawn from the contest, defeated, but not hopeless nor cast down.

He had taken his departure at last with reluctance, and had resumed his seat in the vehicle, before discovering the absence of his uncle. A moment later Mr. Haughton had appeared, had been hurried into the dogcart, much to the offence of his personal dignity, and had carefully kept silent concerning his discovery of Hellice, preserving the secret with

all the cunning peculiar to unbalanced minds until he should be alone with the Baronet.

Sir Richard preserved a cold and stern exterior throughout his return to North Eldon, but his heart was burning with love and pity for the unfriended young girl who had been driven out among strangers. He resolved to secure an interview with her at the earliest possible moment, and to induce her to become his wife without delay. He did not doubt that she would fly to his arms when he should have explained away the difficulties between them, for his love for her was so grand, and strong, and generous, his heart was so great and tender, that the suspicions that had been cast upon her seemed to him the merest folly. That she would let those suspicions be a barrier between them never entered his thoughts.

On reaching the inn and the room they had occupied the previous night, Mr. Haughton unfolded to his nephew the particulars of his wanderings over the Holly Bank mansion, and of his meeting with Hellice. He described, with a faithfulness that drew tears into Sir Richard's eyes, the appearance of the young girl, her pallor, wildness, and distress, and repeated her declaration that she could never again see her lover.

As may be imagined, this communication was like adding fuel to the flame that was consuming the young lover.

Mr. Kenneth had followed him closely to North Eldon, and had departed almost immediately by the train for Wharton. Hellice's only guardian, therefore, was Miss Kenneth.

Sir Richard resolved to return at once to the vicinity of Holly Bank and watch for some opportunity to meet his betrothed in the garden. He comprehended that she would never willingly see him again, while she believed him to be the husband of another; that she would not be allowed to receive a letter from him, and that a meeting with her could only be accomplished by strategy.

He carried his resolution into effect without delay.

Accompanied by his uncle, who refused to be left behind, he returned on foot to Holly Bank, but his vigil of hours in its vicinity was not rewarded by a glimpse of his betrothed.

For days thereafter he haunted the road in front of the mansion. No one gazing from a front window could fail to see that tall, military figure, with the pale, stern face and anxious eyes, as it passed slowly backwards and forwards, looking up in the vain hope of meeting one who strove uselessly to steel her heart against him.

Miss Kenneth was greatly annoyed at his persistency, and ordered the shutters to be kept continually shut, and refused to allow Hellice to quit her presence during the day. The girl's only exercise consisted of a few turns daily up and down the garden in company with her hostess, and of an occasional drive with Miss Kenneth in the close, old-fashioned coach.

It was a dull, dreary existence, and the mistaken spinster rendered it duller and drearier by long sermons of admonition and warning; by requesting the maiden to read aloud wearisome homilies on the commonest virtues, and by enjoining her to repentance for her supposed great wickedness.

Their days were spent in the cosy drawing-room, and while Hellice read, Miss Kenneth plied her tatting-shuttle, or dozed in her great arm-chair.

The rector made his usual weekly visit, and the curate came as usual three times a week, and both were informed of Hellice's supposed depravity, and both enjoined her to repent and turn from the error of her ways. Both were mild, kind-looking men, but to Hellice they were harsh, bitter, and unsparing.

The only bright moments in the girl's dark lot were after she had retired to her room for the night. Then she would sit for hours at her darkened window and watch the noble, manly figure of her lover, sometimes through

tear-blinded eyes, sometimes murmuring his name fondly over and over with endearing epithets, and sometimes struggling with a wild impulse to fly to him, and nestle her weary head against his shoulder.

More than a fortnight passed in this manner, and yet Sir Richard had not tired of his task. He knew that Hellice must often see him, and he resolved to touch her heart by his patience and persistency.

He watched eagerly for opportunities to gain her presence, but Miss Kenneth never left her unguarded during the day. Hellice was not a prisoner, yet her position was scarcely better. Even had she been quite free, however, she would have refused to meet her lover, for she still believed him to be the lawful husband of Margaret Sorel.

One evening—a day or two later than the occurrence of the events related in the preceding chapter—Hellice sat at her window, sad and thoughtful. Her room was unlighted, but her graceful figure in its white robes and scarlet ribbons was plainly visible through the gloom. She was looking through the folds of her curtains for the form of her lover, but it was nowhere to be seen. He had been absent from his post all day, and Hellice had tortured herself with a thousand fears in consequence. Perhaps he was ill. He might at that moment be lying senseless and neglected at the little country inn he had made his head-quarters. Or, he might have given her up at last, determined to waste no more devotion upon one so cold and pitiless. Or, he might have learned of his wife's existence, even if he had been until now ignorant of it, and have taken her back to his heart and home. Or, perhaps, he had become at last convinced of Hellice's unworthiness, and withdrawn from her his love, his homage, even his respect.

Thus ingenious to torture herself, Hellice looked and prayed for the sight of the face that was dearer to her than life.

"If I could only know that he is safe and well!" she murmured, her tones freighted with anguish almost too great to be borne. "Oh, Richard, where are you?"

Again her wild gaze swept up and down the road lying so white and still in the moonlight. She saw only the shadows of the over-arching trees, moving fitfully upon the chalky surface of the road; and heard only the mournful night cries of the birds as they fluttered restlessly among the branches of the trees. The night was brilliant with starlight and moonlight, but there was a solemn coldness, a mournful desolation everywhere, that smote the girl's impressible heart, and moved her to tears.

It seemed to her as if the clouds that had surrounded her hitherto had fallen around her and enveloped her closely like a never-to-be loosened winding-sheet. The very air seemed oppressive to her. Never in her short life had she felt so much in need of a friend, of sympathy, of tenderness. Had Miss Kenneth evinced towards her any sentiment save suspicion she would have flown to her and unburdened her heart. She thought of Lady Redwoode with unutterable longing, with a sort of childish adoration, with a wild upspringing of the heart, and she felt that she would gladly die then could it be with Lady Redwoode's arms about her, Lady Redwoode's breast as her pillow, and with Lady Redwoode's face looking lovingly into her own.

She dared not think long of the Baroness, and her thoughts turned again anxiously to Sir Richard. All her loneliness and desolation came over her in one full black tide of woe. In her anguish she cried, sharply:

"Oh, Richard, Richard!"

Her voice was not loud enough to pass beyond the limits of her chamber, and yet, as if in response to her call, the figure of her lover appeared in front of the gate, with eyes upraised to her window, and with arms outstretched as if to enfold her. He looked pale, careworn, and troubled, in the ghastly moonlight. His usually stern face seemed all aglow



with love and tenderness, and his look was full of anguished pleading.

Had some secret sympathy told him of her yearning cry? Had the chord that still bound him to her vibrated sensibly when her whole being had called out for him? Hellice scarcely waited to ask herself these questions. Her lover was waiting for her, was suffering on her account, and longing for her presence.

She sprang up, her unbound hair falling about her in rippling waves, her breath coming quickly, her eyes glowing, she rushed down the stairs unlocked the front door, and ran along the avenue, conscious of only one fact—that Sir Richard was waiting for her.

He saw the slender, flying figure with unutterable thanksgiving. Springing over the gate, he opened his arms and waited for her.

She came up, hesitated but an instant, and then flew to his embrace, and was gathered passionately and tenderly to his throbbing bosom.

"Oh, my darling, my precious love!" murmured the Baronet, in infinite and tender yearning. "My little wronged girl! Have you suffered so much as I through our separation?"

He lifted her face, so that the moonlight fell upon it. It was paler and thinner than of old, and there were depths of sorrow in the sweet dark eyes, such depths as he would have given years of his life to shield her from.

It had gained a wonderful sweetness, however, and her beauty seemed like that of the angels. The strong, brave spirit was unsubdued, and her mouth had gained a shade of resoluteness in its expression which was tempered by exquisite gentleness.

In the eyes of her enraptured lover, she was perfection itself.

He drew her head back to its resting-place, and stooping, pressed a kiss upon her forehead.

That caress recalled Hellice to herself. She raised her head, withdrew herself gently but firmly from the clasp of his encircling arm, and stood in front of him pale and sorrowful, but quietly resolute.

"It is for the last time, Sir Richard," she said, looking up at him with a gaze that thrilled him with foreboding. "We must henceforth be strangers to each other. I have done wrong to come to you, but I could not resist your look. Let us say good-bye, Sir Richard—good-bye, for ever!"

Sir Richard caught her arm as if he feared she would refuse to hear his words.

"Not so, Hellice," he pleaded. "I can never bid you farewell. Our lives must be one, as are our hearts. My first, my only love, I will not let you go. Listen to me, Hellice. There is no barrier between us. There is no reason why you should refuse to become my wife."

"No reason, Sir Richard? You forget poor Margaret, your wife."

The Baronet's face became momentarily stern at the remembrance of his actress-wife, and how she had darkened his life, and wrought disturbance and separation between him and Hellice; then the memory of his wrongs faded away, and he became eager and impassioned.

"As I live, Hellice," he said, solemnly, raising one hand above his head as if to invoke the attestation of Heaven; "as I live, Margaret Sorel is not my wife. I am free to woo and win you, Hellice—free to make you my honoured wife, whenever you consent to marry me."

"But she said she was your wife," said Hellice, struggling with conflicting emotions.

"She showed me your love-letters, her wedding-ring, and the certificate of your marriage with her. What am I to believe, Sir Richard? She could not have counterfeited those proofs of marriage. She told me the story in a manner that testified to her truthfulness. She did not seek me out. I found her in the garden at Redwoode, suffering as people suffer in anguish worse than death. I cannot believe she spoke falsely to me. What shall I think? Whom shall I believe?"

"Hellice, when I asked you to become my wife, you asked me if I had ever loved before. I answered no. I spoke truthfully. You are my first, my only love, the only being to whom my heart and brain alike gave homage. But, Hellice, there is a passage in my past life with which I should have made you familiar. I promised myself that I would tell you before our marriage. Will you hear my story now?"

Hellice bowed assent, but withdrew her arm from his clasp and stood at a brief distance, awaiting his promised communication.

It seemed to the ardent, troubled young lover that she looked like a judge about to utter a condemnatory sentence, and that she would not regard with forgiving eyes the unpleasant episode he was about to relate, or his previous reticence with regard to it.

With a heavy heart he began his narration.

"Hellice," he said, deprecatingly and sorrowfully, "I was only a boy when I first met Margaret Sorel. I was at Oxford, a grave, ambitious student, looking forward to scholastic honours, although I had barely attained the age of twenty. One evening I went up to town with a party of gay student-friends, and visited a theatre, whose principal attraction was a handsome young actress, who had hitherto played entirely in the provinces. The actress was Margaret Sorel. You have seen her, Hellice, and have doubtlessly noticed that she has a gipsy sort of beauty, which consists more in ruddy colouring than in regularity of feature. There is, and was then, no refinement nor delicacy in her mind or person. But she had a talent for the stage, and looked well before the footlights. I threw her a bouquet, as did many others. Mine she picked up herself, and she bowed her head, and our eyes met. That moment saw the beginning of my boyish infatuation for her."

He paused, as if to give Hellice a chance to speak, but the girl stood pale and silent, and seemingly as cold as a marble statue. There was a despairing accent in his tones as he continued,—

"One of my friends had already made her acquaintance. At my solicitation he took me behind the scenes at the conclusion of the play, and introduced me to Miss Sorel. She received me graciously, flattering my vanity, and pretending to be impressed by my appearance. From that night I neglected studies and friends to devote myself to her. Unlike the other moths who fluttered around her, I offered her an honourable love and marriage. She was ambitious and desirous of establishing herself well in society. She accepted me, and our marriage-day was appointed. I think she loved me, Hellice, but had I been poor and nameless she would have scorned me. The wedding-day came, and we stood together at the altar. At the last moment, Hellice, when I was uttering the vows that bound me to her, a realization of my folly came over me, and I doubted my love for her. The moment was too solemn for further self-deception, and I knew that the feeling I had thought love was mere boyish infatuation. It was then too late to draw back. I promised myself that I would cherish her and care for her, and that she should never know that she had no place in my heart."

"Well?" said Hellice, as he stopped and sighed.

"We went to Margaret Sorel's lodgings to partake of a wedding breakfast and to procure her trunks, for we were going to throw ourselves at my father's feet. I had occasion to leave her on some errand. I returned unexpectedly, and heard her elder brother congratulating her upon her marriage, and saying—Hellice, the story is not fit for your pure ears. It will be enough for me to say that the woman I had married was unworthy of esteem. She had lost the brightest gem of womanhood, her purity. I was shocked—overwhelmed at my discovery. I went in and upbraided her for her deception, and then rushed from her presence. I hastened home and told my father the whole story. He pitied

and forgave me. My love for Margaret Sorel had turned to bitterest loathing, and I resolved to free myself from any claim she might possess upon me. A divorce under the circumstances was easily obtained, and I regained my freedom. Margaret Sorel was my wife in name only, and for one brief half-hour I recognised her as such. The law considered she had entrapped me into marriage, for she was a dissolute woman, older than I. Hellice, can you not look upon that unfortunate marriage as leniently as the law did?"

"You never met her again?" asked Hellice, unheeding her question.

"Never till the day on which you arrived at Redwoode. She made advances to me often enough, but I never heeded them. I shut myself up with my books and tried to forget the world. I became a misanthrope and cynic. Lady Redwoode was my only friend, and her society was my only solace."

He went on to describe the particulars of his meeting with his divorced wife at the roadside inn, and detailed their subsequent interviews. He proved conclusively that his fancied love for her had turned into detestation and aversion, and that the great and enduring passion of his life was that he lavished upon Hellice.

"It is you and you alone whom I love or have ever loved!" he pleaded, in impassioned tones. "You only, Hellice, have been enshrined in my heart. I reverence your purity, your goodness, your loveliness of character, the exquisite refinement and delicacy which is to you what the fragrance is to the rose. Your sterling qualities of mind and heart I appreciate and admire. Forgive me for not telling you my painful story on the night of our betrothal. Take me back again to your love and confidence, dear Hellice. Come to my arms once more, and tell me that henceforth no cloud shall come between us!"

Hellice took a step towards him as if to seek refuge again in his open arms, but a cloud suddenly eclipsed the brightness of her countenance, and she said:

"There is my hand, Sir Richard. I give it you in friendship, not in love. You have amply exonerated yourself, and I love and esteem you more than ever. But I can never marry you—"

"Why not?" interrupted the Baronet, quickly. "You cannot deem me bound to Margaret Sorel?"

"No, Sir Richard. Since the law has declared you free, you are so. It was right that such unholy bonds should be severed, and had I known the truth before my illness I would have kept my troth with you. But it is now too late—too late!"

"Why too late? You cannot mean it, Hellice!"

The girl's features were momentarily convulsed with pain. Her lip quivered, and the wild-rose bloom that had been playing on her cheeks during her lover's protestations deserted them. Her eyes grew strangely bright, and her manner was full of hesitation.

"Sir Richard, is it possible that you do not know why I am here?" she asked.

"Yes, I know what is said at Redwoode, but I do not believe one syllable of the charge!" he responded, vehemently.

"You do not know all the evidence there is against me," said Hellice, with a dreary smile. "Lady Redwoode had begun to love me, yet she believed that I sought her life. Mr. Kenneth is a keen lawyer, yet he believes me guilty of attempting the life I love better than my own. The very servants of Redwoode shrunk away from me in horror. There was only one who believed in my innocence," and her thoughts reverted to Mr. Forsythe's parting words, "only one who spoke a kind word to me when I left Redwoode in disgrace. Even my own grandmother, Renee, turned from me, and refused to defend me or to cheer me by a look of affection!"

(To be continued.)

## FACETIÆ.

THE rule of three—For the third person to clear out.

A MAN who will steal will lie about it. The offences are co-evil.

"BEFORE I was tried," said a condemned culprit, "I thought I was innocent, but I have a conviction now that I was guilty."

VISITOR: "Mercy me! what are those horrible sounds upstairs?" Wife: "Oh, that is nothing but dear George. I suppose he has lost his collar-stud again."

A WAITER spilt some gravy over a lady's dress. The lady was terribly put out. "Never mind," said the waiter; "there's plenty more gravy where that came from."

A LITTLE girl, whose father was a merchant tailor, said to her mother: "Mother, I can always tell when pa makes a misfit, because he always gives you and me fits when he comes home."

"By gosh!" remarked a countryman after his return from the city, where he had been to visit some of his wife's relations, "it seems mighty good to get back where I can eat pie with a knife again."

"THOSE birds flying over yonder are aquatic birds, I suppose?" asked the young man in the seal-brown suit of the captain of the steamer. "No, they ain't," was the scornful reply. "Them's ducks."

DISSATISFIED WIFE: "We cannot agree; we must part for ever." Husband: "All right. But we must not ventilate our sorrows through the press." Wife: "The bare idea! What's the use of separating, then?"

NEW YORKER: "What fresh air you have out here! It's so much fresher than in New-York." Farmer: "Jess so! That's jest what I was saying to my old woman. Why ain't all these big cities built out in the country?"

"WELL, have you arrived at a conclusion yet?" said an irritated creditor to a man on whom he called to collect a bill. "I have," replied the debtor. "Well, what is it?"

"Having arrived at a conclusion, I intend to just stop there."

UNCLE JACOB thinks he has been poisoned, and has a doctor called. After the examination the physician orders him to take an emetic. "It is useless," replies Uncle Jacob; "I have already taken them twice, and they don't stay down."

THE experience of Naomi, the daughter of Enoch, should not be forgotten by girls. She declared that she would not marry anyone who was not "just perfect," and she did not get a husband until she was five hundred and eighty years old.

"ALLOW me to congratulate you," said Fogg, stopping in front of Brown's house, which was receiving a new coat of paint. "What do you mean?" asked Brown. "Why," replied Fogg, "I am glad to see that you are re-covering your property."

A JOCKEY met his old college tutor at a horse-fair, and exclaimed: "What brings you here among these high-brad cattle? Do you think you can distinguish a horse from an ass?" "My boy," replied the tutor, "I soon perceived you among these horses."

BROWN'S EAR.—"They tell me Mr. Brown has a great ear for music," said Fenderson. "Yes," replied Fogg. "I knew he had a great ear—two of them, in fact; but I did not know that they were for music. I supposed that they were used for brushing flies off the top of his head."

"SHAVE?" queried the barber. "Yes;" and the customer drops into a chair. The operation is performed without chloroform.

"How much?" "Threepence." "But I thought this was a twopenny shop?" "It is, for a plain shave; but I happened to cut a gash in your chin, and used alum on it. Penny extra for alum."

A YOUNG lady in Liverpool is so very tender-hearted that she refuses to pare the potatoes. She says she is afraid she might injure their eyes.

OLD maid: "Is this parrot for sale?" Bird-dealer: "Yes, mum." "Can he talk?" "Not yet; but he understands everything you say to him."

Is there a martyr who can pair  
In hist'ry's painful annals  
With him whose wife still makes him wear  
His heavy winter flannels?

"I UNDERSTAND, Clara, that your old bean, Smythe, is going to marry Miss Robinson," said Ella. "Girls often do that when they go to housekeeping." "Do what?" "Why, take a flat."

"WHAT is that terrible racket about?" asked a man as he passed a house and heard a child yelling at the top of its voice. "Oh, that's nothing," exclaimed his companion; "it is simply a woman banging her heir."

YOUNG MAN (to messenger boy): "What did the young lady say when you gave her the flowers?" Messenger Boy: "She asked the young fellow who was sitting on the porch with her if he didn't want some for a button-hole."

"I WAS teasing my husband last night, sweet, for some solitaires like yours, and what do you suppose he said?" "I can't imagine, dear. What was it?" "He said I should probably have some by the time I am as old as you are."

"YOU asked me to bring you a little pin-money," said a young husband to his wife. "Yes, dear," said the lady, expectantly. "Well, to save you the fatigue of going out in this hot weather I have brought you some pins instead."

THE worst case of absence of mind we ever read of was that described in an exchange the other day, when a man, hurrying for the train, thought he had forgotten his watch at home, and took it out to see if he had time to go back for it.

A BOATMAN, in speaking of the meanness of another man, said: "He is the meanest man I ever knew or heard of. I honestly believe that there is not a meaner nor as mean a man living to-day. His mother must have got a patent right on his meanness when he was born."

TEACHER: "How many zones are there?" Boy: "Six." "No, there are only five." "Yes, there are six." "Name them." "The torrid zone, the northern and southern temperate, the northern and southern frigid—" "That's five; what is the other zone?" "O-zone!"

A BEWILDERED-LOOKING man accosts a passer-by. "Beg pardon, sir, but I want to go to the station." "And they won't let you? Poor fellow, I pity you from the bottom of my heart," replied the other, promptly; and he passed on, leaving the bewildered man more bewildered than before.

HE HAD READ THE PAPERS.—Famor Wayback: "I want to see yer boss." Office Boy: "Have you a card, sir?" Farmer Wayback: "Now you go 'long, ye pert little upstart, an' tell yer boss I want to see him. Ye can't come no three card-tricks on me; I've read the papers, an' I'm posted."

"DO you think, young man," he said, "that you will be able to take care of my daughter, Flora, in the style to which she has always been accustomed?" "I think so, sir," answered the young man, confidently. "She refused to go to the picnic with me last week because she said she had 'nothing to wear.'"

A HUSBAND who had incurred the anger of his wife, a terrible virago, sought refuge under his bed. "Come out of that, you brigand, you rascal, you assassin!" screamed his gentle companion. "No, madam," he replied, calmly, "I won't come out. I am going to show you that I shall do as I please in my own house!"

HE (at dinner):—"May I assist you to the cheese, Miss Girtton?" Miss Girtton (just graduated):—"Thanks, no! I am very comfortable where I am! But you may assist the cheese to me, if you will!"

AN ancient omen says that "if two marriages are celebrated simultaneously one of the husbands will die." This omen is no doubt verified in every instance; but we are prepared to believe that the other husband will die, too, if he lives long enough.

THE little folks have a wonderful gift of expression, even if their vocabulary is somewhat limited. Little Richy, a suburban toddler, wasn't feeling very well, and his mother inquired what was the matter. "I feel as if some of me was dead," was the expressive reply.

THE editor of a French journal, in discussing an alliance between his country and Russia, said: "For more than fifty years the burning of Moscow caused a coldness on the part of Russia toward France." The freeing of Napoleon's retreating army gave rise to heated expressions, we suppose.

"YOU put your foot in it nicely to-night," said Mrs. Sweetpeach. "How was that?" asked her husband. "When you told Mrs. Fourthly that you were sure her husband would never go the way he sent other people." "Well, and what of it?" "Why, her husband is a preacher." "Good heavens! I thought he was a sheriff!"

DAUGHTER.—So you knew Clara De Smart's father before he was married. Poor man, he came to the school to see his daughter graduate, and I couldn't help pitying him. Pa—His daughter is a beautiful girl. "Oh, yes, she is rather pretty." "And she delivered the valedictory, and took all the prizes." "Yes; but her dress didn't set fit to be seen."

"WHY, Harry," said a lady to a small boy who was crying in the street, "what's the matter?" "Mother whipped me!" groaned the boy. "What for?" "Cause I fell in the river and got wet." "Well, don't you think you deserved it?" "No, I don't. I came purty near gettin' drowned, and if I had, then wouldn't she a-ried her eyes out? And just because I didn't, and I come home a little wet, she gives me a whippin'. Next time I'll get drowned, and teach her how to treat a feller—boo-hoo!"

A CLERGYMAN, being at Brighton, just after it had been arranged to erect an aquarium there, was conversing with a lady. The name of a gentleman was mentioned, and something the clergyman said showed that he was well acquainted with him. "Dear me!" exclaimed the lady. "I didn't know that Mr. P. was such a friend of yours." "Yes, we have known one another for years," answered the clergyman, adding, as an explanation of their intimacy, "We are both antiquarians, you know." "Oh, yes," replied the lady. "Have you heard that we are going to have an aquarium here?" The clergyman speedily and skillfully changed the subject.

A MILKMAN's sweetheart having asked him to write a verse in her album before he left town for the summer, he took the velvet-bound volume and dashed off the following:

"I am going to the seaside, to the seaside far away,  
For I love the ocean breezes, and I love the dashing spray;  
Yes, I love the gorgeous sunset, love the calm, and love the squall—  
"But I think I love the water, in my business, best of all."

IT is related of an impetuous English judge, that, with his usual desire to be expeditious, he once sentenced a convicted murderer to be hanged, and dismissed him without the customary and important closing formula. The clerk reminded him of the omission. "Ah, yes. Quite so," exclaimed the judge. "Bring the prisoner back. Prisoner at the bar, I beg your pardon. May the Lord have mercy on your soul. Remove the prisoner, jailer. Next case."



SOCIETY.

MADAME PATTI is the fairy godmother of the young American girl "Nikita," or "Fairy of the Niagara," who has made her debut at Col. Mapleson's popular concert. The young singer is a native of Virginia, and since the earliest childhood displayed a marvellous gift of song. Report ascribes to her a romantic history. At six years old she used to sing in concerts. About this time she was stolen by the Indians, and for five years she lived with them, and was treated by them with great kindness. They almost worshipped the child with the beautiful voice. Nikita, the chief of the tribe, behaved as a father to her, and she bore his name. He received a mortal wound in saving her from a great danger, and in dying received the oath of his people to discover Nikita's parents and restore her to them. The vow was fulfilled, Nikita's mother brought her over to Europe, found out Madame Patti, and made the child sing for the great prima donna. From that day Nikita's fortune was made. Madame Patti supervised her musical education, and confided her to the care of her brother-in-law, Mr. Maurice Strakosch.

HER Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to accept from Mrs. E. Magnusson, of Cambridge, a doll dressed in full Icelandic costume for H.R.H. the Princess Margaret of Connaught, and expressed herself much pleased with it.

Mrs. WARDROPER, who has occupied the post of superintendent of the Nightingale Home, at St. Thomas's Hospital, since 1860, was presented with a testimonial by the former and present pupil nurses of the Nightingale Fund School on the occasion of her resignation as superintendent. The gift consisted of a very handsome tea and coffee service bearing an inscription to which the names of the donors were attached.

An interesting performance took place recently in Banff, when a dramatic representation of *Beauty and the Beast* was given in St. Andrew's Hall by twenty-five little children, the youngest of whom were only three years old. There was a large attendance, and much interest was manifested. The two principal characters, Beauty and the Beast, were sustained by Miss Elsie Dunoon and Master Alec Simpson—the former wearing a simple dress of thin white silk, with a long sash of white embroidered net, a bunch of yellow daisies in her belt, and a string of yellow beads round her throat, and the latter (when transformed from Beast to Prince) appeared in a pretty costume—a cap of velvet with pink plume, a doublet of lavender slashed with pink, knee breeches of lavender, and pink silk stockings and shoes, with sword and silver lace belt. A wondrous coat of shaggy fur, and a head that had once been the property of Monsieur Reynard served admirably to represent the Beast.

The queen was distinguished from her attendants by a large silver crescent over the forehead, and on the top of her wand, and a belt of seven silver stars across the bodice of her dress. Master John Scott Moncrieff, attired in a crimson plush dress with lace ruffles, and a cloak lined with white satin, and edged with fur, made a charming little Page of Honour, and with the assistance of Master Ludovic Gordon, a French Cook, poured out the Beast's wine, and ministered most attentively to his and Beauty's wants. A happy introduction was that of a cooks' chorus, who were supposed to be engaged in preparing the wedding feast. The cooks carried some cooking utensils, and were dressed, some all in white, others in pink and white, and blue and white, and had *chefs' caps* of white paper. The piece was interspersed with a number of pretty songs and choruses, and all the little performers sang and acted admirably. The proceeds of the performance go to the fund of the local Artillery Volunteer bazaar.

STATISTICS.

EXHIBITION REFRESHMENTS.—Among the most curious and interesting facts which the report of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition furnishes are those which come under the heading of "Refreshments." The total number of meals served by the National Training School for Cookery was 588,313. Roughly speaking, one in ten of the whole number of visitors helped to furnish the school with opportunities of practice in the culinary art. Gratuities to attendants were here strictly forbidden. Boxes, however, were provided, into which each customer dropped what he pleased on this account, and it appears that when these attendance boxes were opened at the close of the Exhibition they were found to contain £785 15s. 7d., all which was divided among the cooks, waiters and waitresses, and others, in certain proportions. Lockhart's cocoa rooms furnished cheap refreshment to considerably upwards of a million persons. Some notion of the roaring trade done by its rival, the Coffee Tavern Company, can be gathered from the fact that they sold 264,000 penny cups and 295,000 twopenny cups of tea. The strong preference of the poorer class for tea appears from the circumstance that the number of penny cups of coffee sold only amounted to 34,000, and the twopenny cups to 100,000.

GEMS.

DISCOURAGE cunning in a child; cunning is the ape of wisdom.

TRUTH, like the sunbeam, cannot be soiled by any outward touch.

PLEASURE is the flower that fades; remembrance is the lasting perfume.

THERE is but one law for all, namely, that law which governs all law, the law of our Creator, the law of humanity, justice, equity—the law of nature and of nations.

WHENEVER you commend, add your reasons for doing so; it is this which distinguishes the approbation of a man of sense from the flattery of sycophants and fools.

MEDITATION is that exercise of the mind by which it recalls a known truth, as some kind of creatures do their food, to be ruminated upon till all vicious parts be extracted.

'TIS all men's office to speak patience to those that wring under the load of sorrow; but no man's virtue nor sufficiency to be so moral when he shall endure the like himself.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PIES.

CUSTARD PIE.—To fill a quart plate, beat four eggs, add four tablespoonfuls of sugar, a little salt and nutmeg, or lemon as one may prefer, and fill up with milk.

LEMON PIE.—Grate off the yellow rind, free the pulp from the white and seeds. To a cup of boiling water add a cup of sugar, a little of salt, a small piece of butter, and thicken with one tablespoonful of cornflour mixed with a little cold water; when cool add to the lemon with a beaten egg.

To make good pie crust, take four heaping cups of flour to one of lard, add salt and water to make stiff enough to handle, but do not mould. When preparing the upper crust, roll out, spread on a little more lard, sprinkle with flour, fold up and roll out again. For crust for lemon pies repeat this process twice.

APPLE PIE.—Quarter and slice the apple, put a row around the edge of the plate, fill it up, then turn the under crust up over it a little ways. This pie may be seasoned with cinnamon, nutmeg, or other spices, and a little salt. Sweeten it with four tablespoonfuls of sugar and one of treacle if very tart, if not use less; add a spoonful of water unless very juicy; then cover with an upper crust.

MISCELLANEOUS.

QUEEN HENRIETTA-MARIA's signet ring has been presented to the Queen, and now lies by the side of Charles I.'s signet at the Royal Collection at Windsor. It was made in 1628, and passed through the hands of the French diamond merchant, Tavernier, to the Earl of Buchan's collection, where it was set down as belonging to Mary, Queen of Scots. Next it was transferred to the Duke of Brunswick's collection, lately bequeathed to the town of Geneva, and thence it has been brought back for its proper country. The ring is a fine diamond, bearing the British Arms cut in the stone, with the Queen's initials on either side.

JAPANESE FESTIVALS.—The rights and even amusements of children are respected in Japan, and the little folk enjoy many feast days. A great day for the girls is called the "Festival of the Dolls," which occupy on that occasion the state chamber of the house, beautifully decorated in their honour. For weeks before this great day the shops are gay with wonderfully dressed images. Every well-to-do family has a number of dolls of various styles and sizes. Two dolls are purchased whenever a daughter is born to the house, which become her inalienable property, and are finally taken by her to her husband's home. Thus dolls accumulate fast in a family where there are many daughters. This entire day—celebrated on the third of May—is spent by the children in feasting, playing, and mimicking the complete round of feminine duties and interests, all sorts of toys being used to delineate domestic life in various stages. The boys' day occurs on the fifth of July, and is called the "Feast of the Banners." The toys used consist of all the regalia of military display, and are bought for every son born into the family. The streets are gaily decorated, banners being placed at every conceivable point. The boys strut about in military dress, looking very happy and important, and waving flags. At every door a large paper fish floats from a bamboo pole. This fish represents a carp, considered by the Japanese a type of swiftness and strength, and being hollow, responds to each breath of wind by flapping tails and fins in a most lifelike manner.

ENGLISH RESERVE.—Dumas loved to laugh at the expense of English stiffness and reserve. One of his best stories was this: One day Victor Hugo and I were invited to dine with the Duke of Decazes. Among the guests were Lord and Lady Palmerston—of course this happened before the February revolution. At midnight tea was handed around. Victor Hugo and I were sitting side by side, chatting merrily. Lord and Lady Palmerston had arrived very late, and there had, consequently, been no opportunity to introduce us before dinner; after dinner, it seems, it was forgotten. English custom, consequently, did not allow us to be addressed by the illustrious couple. All at once young Decazes comes up to us and says: "My dear Dumas, Lord Palmerston begs you will leave a chair between you and Victor Hugo." I hastened to do as he wished. We moved away from each other, and placed an empty chair between us. Thereupon enters Lord Palmerston, holding the hand of his wife, leads her up to us, and invites her to sit down on the empty chair—all this without saying a word. "My lady," he said to his wife, "what time have you?" She looked at her watch and answered: "Thirty five minutes past twelve." "Well, then," said the great minister, "remember well that this day, at thirty-five minutes past twelve, you were sitting between Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo, an honour which you probably never will enjoy again in your lifetime." Then he offered his arm again to his wife and took her back to her seat without saying a word to us—because we had not been presented!

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. B. G.—Pure water, acidulated with a little lemon juice.

W. T.—It is advisable to have the services of an experienced lawyer.

M. S.—Your handwriting does not denote any particular individuality.

M. L. T.—Do not hesitate to strive for a prize, because you are most likely to win one.

M. H.—The Wellington Barracks was established in 1845 on the site of the great store-house laid out by William III.

L. M.—You should be able at your age to decide in your own mind whether it is right or not. In the interim try to overcome the objections of your grandparent.

H. A. M.—1. The best remedy is to keep a fire constantly in the room, and let the windows be open as much as possible. 2. It is a matter of taste, but we prefer light wall paper.

T. S.—In calling upon a person living in an hotel it is customary to stop in the parlour and send your card to their room. Among very intimate friends this formality is generally dispensed with.

L. C. S.—Venus is the second planet in the order of distance from the sun. She varies in apparent size, but is the brightest of all the planets. Jupiter is the next brightest. Mars looks reddish to the naked eye, but is bright when seen through a telescope. Venus takes 224 days to go round the sun.

N. T.—A book entitled "Historical Memorials of the Tower" was published in London some years ago. The regalia of the English monarchs is in the jewel room of the Tower. On Tower Hill, north-west of the Tower, is the site of the scaffold, and most of the eminent persons executed there were buried in the adjoining St. Peter's church.

L. L.—Should you find an agreeable person in private society, who seems desirous of making your acquaintance, there is no objection to your meeting his advances half-way, although a formal introduction may not have taken place. His presence in your friend's house should be a sufficient guarantee for his respectability, as otherwise he would not be there.

E. A. H.—To make seltzer water, take of muriate of lime and muriate of magnesia, of each four grains; dissolve these in a small quantity of water, and add to it a similar solution of eight grains of bi-carbonate of soda, twenty grains of muriate of soda, and two grains of phosphate of soda. Mix, and add a solution of a quarter of a grain of sulphate of iron. Put the mixed solution in a twenty-ounce bottle, and fill up with aerated water.

D. D. S.—Perhaps the young lady is more prudent than you are, and thinks that she had better wait a little longer before deciding to engage herself to any one. In that case you will be wise to take her sister's advice. Without giving her up see other friends, work hard, cultivate your mind, and then if, in a few years, when you are both old enough to know your own minds, she accepts you, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that she and you are acting on deliberate judgment, and have a better chance of happiness than if you had been engaged at seventeen.

R. L. L.—Egypt is not a "province" of Turkey; nor even a dependency; but a suzerainty, as is Morocco, or Tunis, or Tripoli. Each and all of them have an independence in internal affairs, but in all foreign relations act under the supervision of the Sultan at Constantinople. The ruler of Egypt, called Khedive, is so by virtue of the Sultan's assent, and a tribute which he pays to the Sultan of seven hundred thousand pounds per year. The bond which holds all the Barbary powers and Egypt in this reference to Turkey is that the Sultan is the recognized head of the Mohammedan church.

E. A. S.—There was such a person as Eugene Aram. He was born in England in 1704. He enjoyed a remarkable reputation for extensive scholarship, acquired under the greatest difficulties, his family being very poor. While serving as a schoolmaster he became implicated in a robbery committed by a man named Daniel Clark, but was discharged for lack of evidence. He went immediately to London, and Clark disappeared mysteriously at the same time. Twenty-five years afterwards Aram was arrested and tried for the murder of Clark. He was convicted and hanged. After his conviction he confessed his guilt, and attempted suicide, but was discovered in time to frustrate his purpose.

T. H. H.—1. The engagement ring is worn on the third finger—that is, the finger next the little finger—of the right hand. 2. The wedding ring is worn on the third finger of the left hand. 3. Among the Hebrews the wedding ring was formerly worn on the first finger, but now even they have conformed to the general usage. 4. The question of giving engagement and wedding rings is so old that its origin cannot now be certainly determined. One account is that in making any bargain it was usual to give something as a pledge and token, and as nothing could be more easily carried about, or more securely kept than a ring, this became the token always given to bind the important engagement of marriage. Another explanation is, that as the man in marrying the woman made her the mistress of his house he handed her his ring, which in early times was used as a signet, in place of writing the name, and so denoted the trust and confidence he reposed in his bride.

ANCHOR.—If you ask at any of the bars the managers will give you every information. The hours are very long and the pay not very great.

A. A. S.—To properly define it has puzzled the wisest philosophers and greatest poets of all ages. We must respectfully decline the task.

GOLDEN HOPE.—1. There is nothing but great care in drying. 2. The warts may be cured with nitric acid applied with a camel's hair brush. Care must be taken to avoid touching the surrounding skin. 3. It is fair, but capable of great improvement.

W. E. G.—The City of the Violet Crown is Athens; so-called by its being situated in the centre of the plain of Attica and surrounded by a ring of hills, except upon the south—which looks towards the ocean; and at the sun-setting these hills take the most marvellous violet tints.

B. S.—The name Bible was first given to the Old and New Testament by Chrysostom, in the fourth century. Miles Coverdale published the first Bible, in English, in the reign of Henry VIII., and dedicated it to the King. The first Bible issued by His Majesty's royal authority was Cranmer's Bible, published in 1537.

O. L.—To pickle cucumbers, select small ones, but not too young, wipe them clean with a dry cloth, put into a jar, and pour boiling vinegar over them, adding a handful of salt. Boil up the vinegar every three days, and pour it on them until they become green; then add ginger and pepper, and tie them up close for use.

PET.—Air, exercise, and a generous diet by developing your whole body may help your trouble, for which there is no specific remedy save padding. Tincture of myrrh will whiten the teeth, also sweeten the breath, unless the ill-odour comes from a foul stomach. As to vocal teachers you must decide for yourself. Lemon juice or an egg beaten light with sugar will clear the voice.

## LOSS AND GAIN.

If the June rose could guess  
Before the sunbeam wooed her from the bud,  
And reddened into life her faint young blood,  
What blight should fall upon her loveliness,  
What darkness of decay, what shroud of snow—  
Would the rose ever blow?

If the wild lark could feel  
When first between two worlds he carolled clear,  
Voicing the ecstasy of either sphere,  
What apathy of song should o'er him steal,  
What broken accents and what faltering wing—  
Would the lark ever sing?

Alas, and yet alas,  
For glory of existence that shall pass!  
For pride of beauty and for strength of song!  
Yet were the untired life a deeper wrong.  
Better a single throb of being win,  
Than never to have been!

K. P. O.

E. F. H.—The Tower of London is the most celebrated citadel in England. It is of very ancient origin, some authorities are said to have traced it to Julius Cæsar. The lieutenant-governor resides in the bell tower, and the governor is called constable. The Duke of Wellington held the latter office for some time, and he frequently called attention to the exposed condition of London in the event of a foreign invasion, the Tower being its only fortress.

G. G. S.—An excellent domestic vinegar may be made by dissolving one and a quarter pounds of sugar to each gallon of water used, with a quarter of a pint of good yeast. If the heat of the mixture be maintained at 70 to 80 degrees Fahr., acetication will set in, so that in two or three days it may be racked off from the sediment into a cask. It then receives the addition of one ounce of cream of tartar and one ounce of crushed raisins. When freed from sweet taste, bottle and cork closely. Vinegar made in this way keeps better than that made from malt liquors; but cider vinegar is considered the best for pickles.

C. C.—Puck was a celebrated fairy, called also Robin Goodfellow, Friar Rush, and Pug, &c. He was the "merry wanderer of the night." Niobe was a character in Grecian mythology, the wife of Amphion, King of Thebes. She was so proud of her children that she provoked Apollo and Diana, who slew them all; upon which Niobe was struck dumb with grief, remaining stupid ever after. The poets prettily fancy her to have been turned to stone. Queen Mab is the name always used by English poets to designate the imaginary queen of the fairies. You can post yourself concerning mythological characters by obtaining books on Grecian and more modern mythology, or by a good classical dictionary.

W. C. S.—We are not at all surprised at the young lady's conduct. You have been paying her regular attention for over a year, and during that time have shown your affection in various ways, but have made no verbal or written declaration of it. It is quite possible that she loves you, as you think, but she could not, without a sacrifice of maidenly modesty, manifest it until you had given her the opportunity by first revealing your own feeling towards her. Your failure to do so on occasions when you had led her to think that you were about to give word to your preference may have led her to think you require a little disciplining, and we think she is right. Now that you have lost the opportunity to address her otherwise, the only course left is to write her a straight-forward manly letter.

ONFIRMUS.—Seeing that the gentleman's failure was his loss and not yours it would be a generous act to make an occasion for a repetition of the experiment. "At Home" does not mean to receive every one. You are quite right in confining your guests to those you admire, or to those whose more intimate acquaintance you desire.

AMT.—The word metre is the French measure, and, in the metric system devised by the French Academy commission for a common standard of weights and measures, is equivalent to 1,000 yards—a yard and nine one-hundredths of a yard. The metric system is the simplest and most perfect ever devised—the very name of the weight or measure indicating its value.

LETITIA.—The delicious breakfast puffs are the envy of every good housekeeper. They are made as follows:—Take two eggs, well beaten, and stir into a pint of milk, a little salt, a piece of butter, and a pint and a half of flour. Beat the egg and stir the milk, add the salt, melt the butter and stir in, then pour all into the flour, so as not to have it lumpy. Stir up thoroughly, and grease the cups into which the batter is poured, filling them two-thirds full. Eat with sauce.

MONA.—You will ere this have seen our previous answer. You must really use your own discretion as to which you will choose. From what you say of your education, and from what we can judge from the matter, style, composition, and handwriting of your letters, we should think you would have no reasonable difficulty in getting a post. 2. They are not generally in Government employ. They are servants of the Postmaster. Be sure you learn thoroughly both to read and to send.

ESTHER.—It is known that the Chinese, as early as 939 A.D., fastened rockets to their arrows, that the latter might be thrown to a greater distance. This, however, was not the real origin of the use of gunpowder with projectiles—gunpowder artillery having been used in China as early as 85 A.D. The Moorish King of Cordova, Abd-el-Mumen, used rude artillery in 1156 against the Sicilians, but A.D. 1327 is the earliest record we have of the use of artillery by the English; and it was not till 1521 that cast cannons were first made in this country.

M. M.—To clean ribbons, wet the ribbon in alcohol, and fasten one end of it to something firm, holding the other in your hand and keeping the ribbon straight and smooth. Rub it with a piece of castile soap until well covered; then rub it hard with a sponge, or if much soiled, with the back of a knife, keeping the ribbon dripping wet with alcohol; rub it thoroughly, and when clean rinse it well in alcohol, fold and put between cloths, and then iron with a hot iron. Do not wring the ribbon, for creases might get into it which it would be difficult to get out.

L. D. T.—The Russian standard is a double-headed eagle, with a shield as its body, containing the representation of St. George and the Dragon. A Russian man-of-war flag has a blue St. Andrew's cross on a white ground. The Russian Union Jack has a blue St. Andrew's cross and a white St. George's cross on a red ground. The Russian merchant vessel carries a tricolour flag, the colours being arranged horizontally, with blue in the middle, the red below, and the white above. In the French tricolour they are vertical, with white in the middle, the blue next the staff, and the red outside.

F. F. asks what she ought to say to a proposal of marriage from a gentleman whom she likes very well—as well as any man she knows—but with whom she is not desperately in love. F. F.'s, perhaps, is not a nature to be very desperately in love with any man; or she may grow to be desperately in love with this same young man if she keeps on associating with him. Suppose she tells him exactly how she feels and suggests that he renew his proposal a few months later? By that time she may know her own mind, or heart, better, and she will also have further opportunity to study the gentleman's character and quality more fully.

A. B. D.—Friends have to learn to bear and forbear with one another. There are sore traits in their dispositions which ought to be given a wide birth, or else misunderstandings and alienations are pretty sure to befall. Some folks of excellent social natures cannot bear to be teased about trifles, and will fall into a fit of the sulks when the placid tenour of their ways is thus infringed upon. The only way to restore peace is to apologize for such an unintentional offence, and to take good care that it be not repeated. It will not answer, in your own case, to stand off in cold silence until your lady friend appears to be willing to show herself sociable again. In that event, all the chances are that matters would go from bad to worse, and the intimacy would come to an end.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free. Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 805, New Ready, price Sixpence, post-free, Hightpence. Also Vol. XLVIII., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. R. SPECK; and Printed by WOODFALL and KINDER, 69 to 76, Long Acre, W.C.

